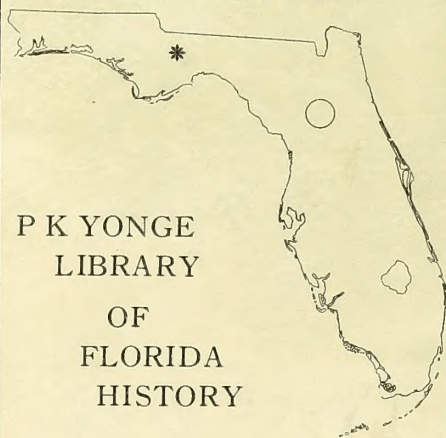



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SLAVE INTERVIEWS

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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
Miami, Florida

Cora Mae Taylor
2610 N.W. 23rd Ave.
Miami, Florida

Re: Folk Lore

EX-SLAVES

Clippings from the Remnant

ELI BOYD

Rev. Eli Boyd was born, May 29, 1864, 4 miles from Gomer-ville, S.C. on John Murray's plantation. It was a very large plantation with perhaps one hundred slaves and their families. As he was only a tiny baby when freedom came, he had no "recomen-brance" of the real slavery days, but he lived on the same planta-tion for many years until his father and mother died in 1888.

"I worked on the plantation just like they did in the real slavery days, only I received a small wage. I picked cotton and thinned rice. I always did just what they told me to do and didn't ever get into any trouble, except once and that was my own fault.

You see, it was this way. They gave me a bucket of thick clabber to take to the hogs. I was hungry and took the bucket and sat down behind the barn and ate every bit of it. I didn't know it would make me sick, but was I sick? I swelled up so that I all but bust. They had to doctor on me. They took soot out of the chimney and mixed it with salt and made me take that. I guess they saved my life, for I was awful sick.

I never learned to read until I was 26 years old. That was

after I left the plantation. I was staying at a place washing dishes for Goodyear's at Sapville, Ga., 6 miles from Waycross, Ga. I found a Webster's spelling book that had been thrown away and I learned to read from that.

I wasn't converted until I went to work in a turpentine still and five years later I was called to preach. I am one of 13 children and none of us ever been arrested. We were taught right.

I kept on preaching until I came to Miami. I have been assistant pastor at Bethel African Methodist Church for the past 10 years.

I belong to a class of Negroes called Geechees. My grandfather was brought directly from Africa to Port Royal, S. C. My grandmother used to hold up her hand and look at it and sing out of her hand. She'd make them up as she would look at her hand. She sang in Geechee and also made rhymes and songs in English.

FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT
The American Guide (Negro Writers Unit)
Jacksonville, Fla.

Martin D. Richardson
Field Worker
Words

Slave Interview
Brooksville

AMBROSE DOUGLASS

In 1860, when he was 16 years old, Ambrose Hilliard Douglass was given a sound beating by his North Carolina master because he attempted to refuse the mate that had been given to him --- with the instructions to produce a healthy boy-child by her ---- and a long argument on the value of having good, strong, healthy children. In 1937, at the age of 92, Ambrose Douglass welcomed his 38th child into the world.

The near-centennarian lives near Brooksville, in Hernando County, on a run-down farm that he no longer attempts to tend now that most of his 38 children have deserted the farm for the more lucrative employment of the cities of the phosphate camps.

Douglass was born free in Detroit in 1845. His parents returned South to visit relatives still in slavery, and were soon reenslaved themselves, with their children. Ambrose was one of these.

For 21 years he remained in slavery; sometimes at the plantation of his original master in North Carolina, sometimes in other sections after he had been sold to different masters.

"Yassuh, I been sold a lot of times", the old man states. "Our master didn't believe in keeping a house, a horse or a ducky after he had a chance to make some money on him. Mostly, though, I was sold when I cut up".

"I was a young man", he continues, "and didn't see why I should be anybody's slave. I'd run away every chance I got. Sometimes they near killed me, but mostly they just sold me. I guess I was pretty husky, at that."

"They never did get their money's worth out of me, though. I worked as long as they stood over me, then I ran around with the gals or sneaked off to the woods. Sometimes they used to put dogs on me to git me back.

"When they finally sold me to a man up in Suwanee County. --- his name was Harris --- I thought it would be the end of the world. We had heard about him all the way up in Virginia. They said he beat you, starved you and tied you up when you didn't work, and killed you if you ran away.

"But I never had a better master. He never beat me, and always fed all of us. 'Course, we didn't get too much to eat; corn meal, a little piece of fat meat now and then, cabbages, greens, potatoes, and plenty of mplasses. When I worked up at 'the house' I et just what the master et; sometimes he would give it to me hisself. When he didn't, I et it anyway.

"He was so good, and I was so scared of him, till I didn't ever run away from his place", Ambrose reminisces; "I had somebody there that I liked, anyway. When he finally went to the war he sold me back to a man in North Carolina, in Hornett County. But the war was near over then; I soon was as free as I am now.

"I guess we musta celebrated 'Mancipation about twelve times in ~~North~~ Hornett County. Every time a bunch of No'thern sojers would



come through they would tell us we was free and we'd begin celebra-
tin'. Before we would get through somebody else would tell us to go
back to work, and we would go. Some of us wanted to jine up with the
army, but didn't know who was goin' to win and didn't take no chances.

"I was 21 when freedom finally came, and that time I didn't
take no chances on 'em taking it back again. I lit out for Florida
and wound up in Madison County. I had a nice time there; I got mar-
ried, got a plenty of work, and made me a little money. I fixed hou-
ses, built 'em, worked around the yards, and did everything. My first
child was already born; I didn't know there was goin' to be 37 more,
though. I guess I would have stopped right there.....

"I stayed in Madison County until they started to working
concrete rock down here. I heard about it and thought that would be
a good way for me to feed all them two dozen children I had. So
I came down this side. That was about 20 years ago.

" I got married again after I got here; right soon after. My
wife now is 30 years old; we already had 13 children together". (His
wife is a slight, girlish-looking woman; she says she was 13 when she
married Douglass, had her first child that year. Eleven of her thir-
teen are still living.)

"Nossuh, I ain't long stopped work. I worked here in the phos-
phate mine until last year, when they started to paying pensions. I
thought I would git one, but all I got was some FWA work, and this year
they told me I was too old for that. I told 'em I wasn't but 91, but
they didn't give me nothin' else. I guess I'll git my pension soon,
though. My oldest bry ought to git it, too; he's sixty-five".



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (North Atlantic Unit)
Chaseville, Florida

Sherman

J.M. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete
3, 206 words
13 Pages

Slave Interview
August 28, 1936
John A. Simms
Editor

In Chaseville, Florida, about twelve miles from Jacksonville on the north side of the Saint Johns River lives William Sherman (locally pronounced Sherman), a former slave of Jack Davis, nephew of President Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy. (1)

William Sherman was born on the plantation of Jack Davis, about five miles from Chaseville, South Carolina, at a place called "Black Swamp," June 12, 1843, twenty-three years prior to Emancipation. His father who was also named William Sherman, was a free man, having bought his freedom for eight hundred dollars from his former master, John Jones, who also lived in the vicinity of the Davis' plantation. William Sherman, senior, bargained with his master to obtain his freedom, however, for he did not have the money to readily pay him. He hired himself out to some of the wealthy plantation owners and applied what he earned toward the payment for his freedom. He was a skilled blacksmith and cabinet-maker and his services were always in



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Chaseville, Florida

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demand. After procuring his freedom he bought a tract of land from his former master and built a home and blacksmith shop on it. As was the custom during slavery, a person who bought his freedom had to have a guardian; Sherman's former master, John Jones, acted as his guardian. Under this new order of things Sherman was in reality his own master. He was not "bossed," had his own house, earned and kept his money, and was at liberty to leave the territory if he desired. However, he remained and married Anna Georgia, the sister of William Sherman, junior. She was also a slave of Jaul Davis. After William Sherman, senior, finished his day's work he would go to the Davis plantation to visit his wife and sometimes remain for the night. It was his intention to purchase the freedom of his wife Anna Georgia, and their son Willie, but he died before he had sufficient money to do so, and also before the Civil War, which he predicted would occur between the North and South. His son Willie says that he remembers well the events that led up to his father's burial; he states that the white people dug his grave which was six feet deep. It took them three days in which to dig it on account of the hardness of the clay; when it was finished he was put peacefully away by the white folk who thought so much of him. Willie was a boy of nine at that time, and he remembers that his mother was so grieved that he tried to console her by talk-



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ling her not to worry "papa's gain' to com' back and bring us some more quails" (he had been accustomed to bringing them quails during his life) but William sorrowfully said "he never will come back."

Anna Georgia was a cook and general house woman in the Davis' home. She was a half breed, her mother being a Cherokee Indian. Her husband, William, was a descendant of the Cheshaw Indians, some of his forebears being full-blooded Cheshaws. Their Indian blood was fully evident, stated William junior. The Davis family tree as he knew it was as follows: three brothers, Sam, Thomas and Jefferson Davis (President of the Confederacy.) Sam was the eldest of the three and had four children, viz: Jack, Robert, Richard and Washington. Thomas had four, viz: James, Richard, Fusha and Vinna. Jefferson Davis' family was not known to William as he lived in Virginia, whereas, the other brothers and their families lived near each other at "Black Swamp."

Jack Davis, the master of William Sherman, was the son of Sam Davis, brother of Jefferson Davis. These two Sam Davis were comparatively large men, while Jefferson was thin and of medium height, resembling to a great extent the late Henry Flagler of Florida East Coast fame, stated William. Many times he would come to visit his brothers at "Black Swamp." He would drive up in a two-wheeled buggy, drawn by a horse.



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. Oft'times he visited his nephew, Jack and they would get together in a lengthy conversation. Sometimes he would remain with the Davis family for a few days and then return to Virginia. On these visits William states that he saw him personally. These visits or sojourns occurred prior to the Civil War. Jack Davis being a comparatively poor man had only eight slaves on his plantation; they were housed in log cabins made of cypress timber notched together in such a way as to give it the appearance of having been built of regular lumber. It was much larger and of different architecture than the slave cabins, however.

The few slaves that he had arose at 4:00 o'clock in the morning and prepared themselves for the field. They stopped at noon for a light lunch which they always took with them and at sun-down they quit work and went to their respective cabins. Cotton, corn, potatoes and other commodities were raised. There was no regular "overseer" employed. Davis, the master, acted in that capacity. He was very kind to them and seldom used the whip. After the outbreak of the Civil War, white men called "patrollers" were posted around the various plantations to guard against runaways, and if slaves were caught off their respective plantations without permits from their masters they were severely whipped. This was not the



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James Johnson
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routine for Jack Davis' slaves for he gave the "patrollers" specific orders that if any of them were caught off the plantation without a permit not to molest them but to let them proceed where they were bound. Will said that one of the slaves ran away and when he was caught his master gave him a light whipping and told him to "go on now and run away if you want to." He said the slave walked away but never attempted to run away again. Will states that he was somewhat of a "pet" around the plantation and did almost as he wanted to. He would go hunting, fishing and swimming with his master's sons who were about his age. Sometimes he would get into a fight with one of the boys and many times he would be the victor, his fallen foe would sometimes exclaim that "that licking that you gave me sure hurt," and that ended the affair; there was no further ill feeling between them.

Education: The slaves were not allowed to study. The white children studied a large "Blue Back" Webster Speller and when one had thoroughly learned its contents he was considered to be educated.

Religion: The slaves had their own church but sometimes went to the churches of their white masters where they were relegated to the extreme rear. John Wiley, a white man, often preached to them and would admonish them as follows; "you must obey your master and mistress, you must be good



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niggers." After the beginning of the war they held "meetings" among themselves in their cabins.

Baptism: Those slaves who believed and accepted the Christian Doctrine were admitted into the church after being baptized in one of the surrounding ponds.

Cruelties: There was a very wealthy plantation owner who lived near the Davis plantation; he had eleven plantations; the smallest one was cultivated by three hundred slaves. Oftentimes they would work nearly all night. Will states that it was not an unusual thing to hear in the early mornings the echoes of raw hide whips cracking like the report of a gun against the bare backs of the slaves who were being whipped. They would moan and groan in agony, but the whipping went on until the master's wrath was appeased. John Stokes, a white plantation owner who lived near the Davis' plantation encouraged slaves to steal from their masters and bring the stolen goods to him; he would purchase the goods for much less than their value. One time one of the slaves "put it out" that "Massa" Stokes was buying stolen goods. Stokes heard of this and his wrath was aroused; he had to find the "nigger" who was circulating this rumor. He went after him in great fury and finally succeeded in locating him, whereupon, he gave him a good "lacing" and warned him "if he ever heard anything like that again from him he was going to kill him." The accusations were true, however, but the slave



Assisted in further dissemination of the article for "old times
Florida was a treacherous man." On another occasion one of the
Chico's slaves ran away and he sent Slaves Titus, known as the
"dog man," to catch the runaway. (The dogs that were in pursuit of
the runaway slaves were called "dog men"; they were well trained
usually for on to the runaway slaves.) This particular slave was with
a "dog man" on the day that were trailing him was an old man
some twenty years of age; the dog man was in the road
and began howling, indicating that they were approaching their prey.
They entered the road to get their victim who was securely hidden
from sight; they disappeared and the next seen of them was their
dead bodies floating near the shore of the pond; they had been killed
by the dogs. They were full-blooded blacks, and as there were
in the pond many slaves and were about fifty in number. The slave
made his escape and was never seen again. Will relates that it was
very cold and that he had been warned that the slave would attack
the lay women of the pond, but evidently he did survive it.

Serial Two: It was rumored that Abraham Lincoln
said to Jefferson Davis, "wait the slaves until they are about
fifty-five or sixty years of age, then liberate them." Davis re-
plied: "I'll never do it. Before I will, I'll wash them in
blood." The result was that in 1861, the Civil War, that struggle
which was to mark the final emancipation of the slaves

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James Johnson
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began. Jefferson Davis' brothers, Sam and Tom, joined the Confederate forces, together with their sons who were old enough to go, except James, Tom's son, who could not go on account of ill health and was left behind as overseer on Jack Davis' plantation. Jack Davis joined the artillery regiment of Captain Bessers Company. The war progressed, Sherman was on his famous march. The "Yankess" had made such sweeping advances until they were in Robertsville, South Carolina, about five miles from Black Swamp. The report of gun fire and cannon could be heard from the plantation. "Truly the Yanks are here" everybody thought. The only happy folk were the slaves, the whites were in distress. Jack Davis returned from the field of battle to his plantation. He was on a short furlough. His wife, "Minnie" Davis asked him excitedly, if he thought the "Yankess" were going to win. He replied: "No if I did I'd kill every darned nigger on the place." Will who was then a lad of nineteen was standing nearby and on hearing his master's remarks, said: "The Yankess aint gonna kill no cause we goin to Laurel Bay" (a swamp located on the plantation.) Will says that what he really meant was that his master was not going to kill him because he intended to run off and go to the "Yankess." That afternoon Jack Davis returned to the "front" and that night Will told his mother, Anna Georgia, that he was going to Robertsville and join the "Yankess." He and his cousin

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who lived on the Davis' plantation slipped off and wended their way to all of the surrounding plantations spreading the news that the "Yankees" were in Robertsville and exhorting them to follow and join them. Soon the two had a following of about five hundred slaves who abandoned their masters' plantations "to meet the Yankees." En masse they worked down fences that obstructed their passage, carefully avoiding "Confederate pickets" who were stationed throughout the countryside. After marching about five miles they reached a bridge that spanned the Savannah River, a point that the "Yankees" held. There was a Union soldier standing guard and before he realized it, this group of five hundred slaves were upon him. Becoming cognizant that someone was upon him, he wheeled around in the darkness, with gun levelled at the approaching slaves and cried "Halt." Will's cousin then spoke up, "Don't shoot we're Jim's friends." After recognizing who they were, they were admitted into the camp that was established around the bridge. There were about seven thousand of General Sherman's soldiers camped there, having crossed the Savannah River on a pontoon bridge that they had constructed while enroute from Camden, South Georgia, which they had taken. The guard who had let these people approach so near to him without realizing their approach was



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James Johnson
Chassaville, Florida

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court martialled that night for being dilatory in his duties. The Federal officers told the slaves that they could go along with them or go to Savannah, a place that they had already captured. Will decided that it was best for him to go to Savannah. He left, but the majority of the slaves remained with the troops. They were enroute to Barnwell, South Carolina, to seize ~~Elle Creek Fort~~ that was held by the Confederates. As the Federal troops marched ahead, they were followed by the volunteer slaves. Most of these unfortunate slaves were slain by "bush whackers" (Confederate snipers who fired upon them from ambush.) After being killed they were decapitated and their heads placed upon posts that lined the fields so that they could be seen by other slaves to warn them of what would befall them if they attempted to escape. The battle at ~~Elle Creek Fort~~ was one in which both armies displayed great heroism; most of the Federal troops that made the first attack, were killed as the Confederates seemed to be irresistible. After rushing up re-inforcements, the Federals were successful in capturing it and a large number of "Rebels."

General Sherman's custom was to march ahead of his army and cut rights-of-way for them to pass. At this point of the war, many of the slaves were escaping from their plantations and joining the "Yankees." All of these slaves at ~~Black Swamp~~ who did not voluntarily run away and go to the "Yankees" were now free

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Chaseville, Florida

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by right of conquest of the Federals.

Will now found himself in Savannah, Georgia, after refusing to go to Barnwell, South Carolina, with the Federals; this refusal saved him from the fate of his unfortunate brothers who went. Savannah was filled with smoke, the aftermath of a great battle. Lying in the Broad River between Beaufort, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia were two Union gun boats, the "Tabash" and "Man O War," which had taken part in the battle that resulted in the capture of Savannah. Everything was now peaceful again; Savannah was now a Union city. Many of the slaves were joining the Union army. Those slaves who joined were trained ^{for} about two days and then sent to the front; due to lack of training they were soon killed. The weather was cold, it was February, 1862, frost was on the ground. Will soon left Savannah for Beaufort, South Carolina which had fallen before the "Yank-ee" attack. Soldiers and slaves filled the streets. The slaves were given all of the food and clothes that they could carry- confiscated goods from the "Rebels." After a bloody struggle in which both sides lost heavily and which lasted for about five years, the war finally ended May 15, 1865. Will was then a young man twenty-three years of age and was still in Beaufort. He says that day was a gala day. Everybody celebrated (except the Southern-ers), the slaves were free.



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James Johnson
Chaseville, Florida

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Thousands of Federal soldiers were in evidence. The Union army was victorious and "Sherman's March" was a success. He states that when Jefferson Davis was captured he was disguised in women's clothes.

Sherman states that Florida had a reputation of having very cruel masters. He says that when slaves got very unruly, they were told that they were going to be sent to Florida as they could be handled. During the war thousands of slaves fled from Virginia into Connecticut and New Hampshire. In 1867 William Sherman left Beaufort and went to Mayport, Florida to live. He remained there until 1890, then moved to Arcos, Florida, living there for awhile; he finally settled in Chaseville, Florida, where he now lives. During his many years of life he has been married twice and has been the father of sixteen children, all of whom are dead. He never received any formal education, but learned to read and studied taxidermy which he practiced for many years.

He was at one time Inspector of Elections at Mayport during Reconstruction Days. He recalled an incident that occurred during the performance of his duties there, which was as follows: Mr. John Dorratt who was running for office on the Democratic ticket brought a number of colored people to Mayport by boat from Chaseville to vote. Mr. Dorratt demanded that they should vote, but Will Sherman was equally insistent that they should not vote because they



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Chaseville, Florida

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had not registered and were not qualified. After such arguing Mr. Doggett saw that Sherman could not be made "to see the light" and left with his prospective voters. Willise Sherman once served upon a United States Federal jury during his color-ful life.

In appearance he could easily be regarded as a phenomenon. He is ninety-four years of age, though he appears to be only about fifty-five. His hair is black and not grey as would be expected; his face is round and unlined; he has dark piercing but kindly eyes. He is of rather sturdy stature. He has an exceptionally alert mind and recalls past events with the ease of a youth. The Indian blood that flows in his veins is plainly visible in his features, the color of his skin and the texture of his hair.

He gives as his reason for his lengthy life the Indian blood that is in him and says that he expects to live for ninety-four more years. Today he lives alone. He raises a few vegetables and is content in the memories of his past life which has been full. (2)

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Chaseville, Florida

J.M. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
August 28, 1936
John A. Simms
Editor

REFERENCES

1. Most of his friends call him SHERMAN, hence he adopted that name.
2. A personal interview with William Sherman, former slave, at his home in Colored quarters, Chaseville, Florida.

FEDERAL WRITING PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Belt)
Daytona Beach, Florida

L. Johnson Baker
Field Worker
Complete
980 Words
5 Pages

Slave Interview
January 11, 1937

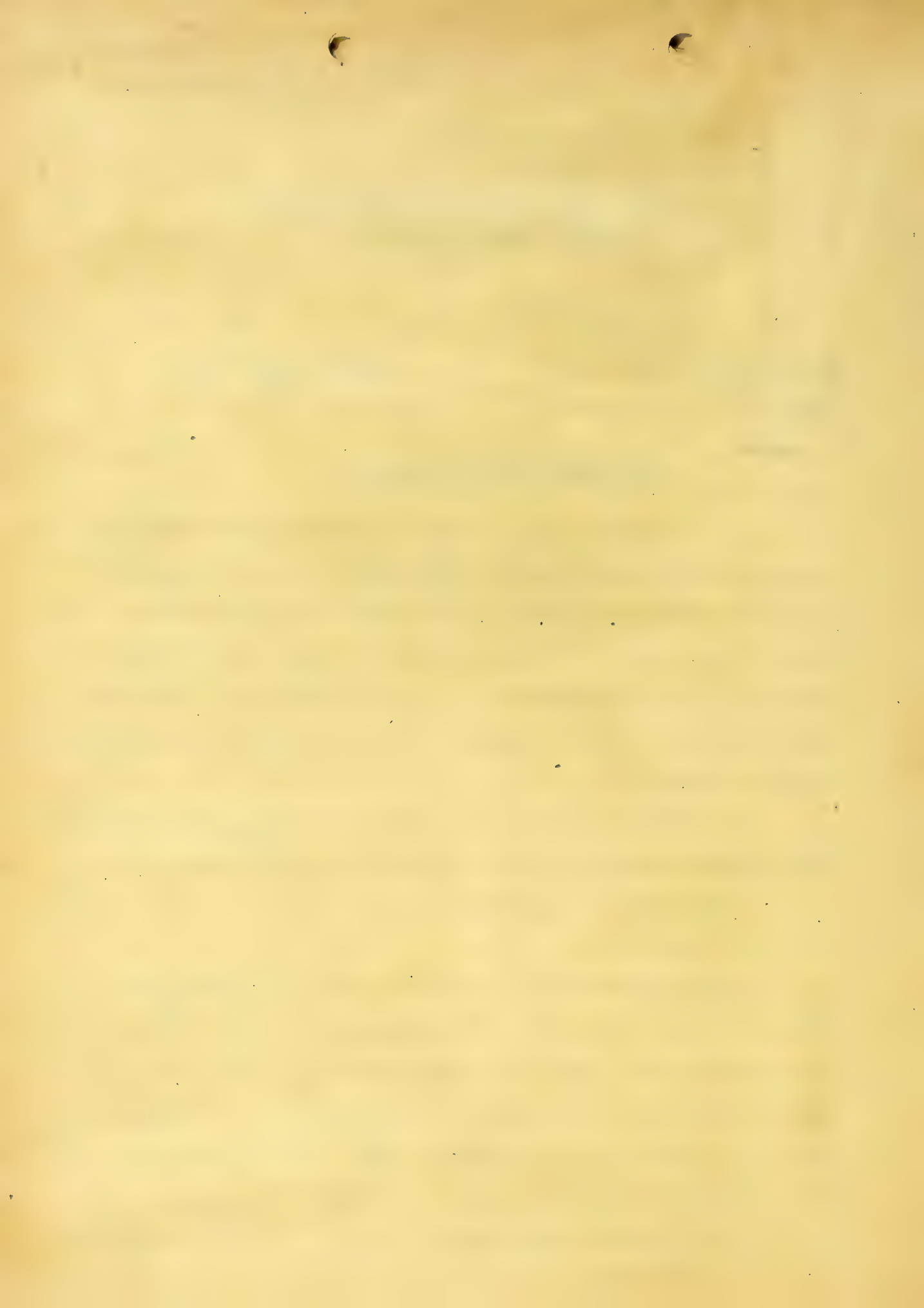
"Prophet" John Henry Kemp

A long grey beard, a pair of piercing owl-like eyes and large bare feet, such "Prophet" Kemp among the citizens of Daytona Beach, Florida. The "Prophet", christened John Henry- as early as he can remember- is an 80 year old ex-slave whose reminiscences of the past, delight all those who can prevail upon him to talk of his early life on the plantations of the section.

"Prophet" Kemp does not talk only of the past, however. His conversation turns to the future; he believes himself to be equally competent to talk of the future, and talks more of the latter if permitted.

Okechobee County, Mississippi was the birthplace of the "Prophet". The first master he can remember was John Gay, owner of a plantation of some 2,700 acres and over 100 slaves and a heavy drinker. The "Prophet" calls Gay "Faktor", and became very vague when asked if this title is a brand title or a name of which he is generally known.

According to Kemp- Gay was one of the wealthiest plantation



Slave Interview
L. Johnson Baker
Dayton Beach, Florida

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owners in the entire section, and frequently voiced his pride in being able to employ the cruellest overseers that could be found in all Mississippi. Among these were such men as O.T. Turner, Fale T. Thompson, Billy Hale, Andrew Winston and other men with statewide reputations for brutality. When all of the brutality of one overseer had been told by the slaves on the Gay plantation and another owner man's reputation was heard of on the Gay plantation, the master would delight in telling his slaves that if they did not believe, he would send for this man. "Behaving" - the "Prophet" says, went living on a place and then one should have, sitting only at his command and for purposes purely of breeding more and stronger slaves on his plantation for sale. In some cases with women - subjecting to his every demand if they would secure freedom by the wife for half a day or being beaten with a cowhide whip.

Among these whippings, the "Prophet" tells many a blood-curdling tale.

"One day when an old woman was plowing in the field, an overseer came by and seeing that she was behind so slow - and gave her such loud talk, he took out a long bloody - whip and lashed her severely. The woman looked up and back at her hoe and showed his right across his head, and child you should have seen how she whipped it's run to a bloody death."

"Prophet" says will tell you that he likes to tell



100

To prove this fact in which Gay was told that the King's mother, Arnette Young, complained to Mrs. Gay, that her husband was constantly seeking her for a pleasure and threatening her with death if she did not submit, even Mrs. Gay had to advise the slave to do as Gay demanded, saying "My husband is a dirty man and will find some means to kill you if you don't." "I can't do a thing with him." When Arnette asked of the "big house" there was no alternative, but it was believed that out of the union with her master, Harry was born. A young slave by the name of Broxton King was given to the woman as husband at the time Jane King was born, it is from this man that "Prophet" took his name.

Life on the plantation held nothing but misery for the slaves of John Jay. A week's allowance of groceries for the average small family consisted of a package of about ten pounds containing roughly ground meal, a slab of bacon - sliced and salted and free of fat - a quart of syrup made from molasses, something upon the nature

All slaves reported for work at 5 o'clock in the morning, except those who cared for the overseer, who began their work an hour earlier to enable the overseer to be present at the morning checkup. This checkup determined which slaves were idle or who had committed some offense late on the day before or during the night. Those who were singled out and before the rest of the slaves began their



Slave Interview
L. B. ...
Daytona Beach, Florida

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work they were treated to the sight of these delinquents being
stripped and beaten until blood flowed; women were no exception
to the rule.

The possible loss of his slaves upon the emancipation
of freedom on January 1, 1863 caused Gay considerable concern.
His liquor ridden mind was not long in finding a solution, however,
he barred all visitors from his plantation and insisted that his
overseers see to the carrying out of this detail. They did, with
such efficiency that it was not until May 4, when the government
finally learned of the condition and sent a marshal to the plan-
tation, that freedom came to Gay's slaves. By 8, he still remained
in this section of Mississippi as the official emancipation day.

Relief for the thousands of slaves of Gay came at last
with the emancipation of freedom for them. The government officials
divided the grown and growing crops; and some land was parcelled
out to the former slaves.

Gay may have gained the name "Prophet" from his con-
stant reference to the future and to his religion. He says he be-
lieves on one faith, one Lord and one religion, and preaches this
belief constantly. He claims to have turned his back on all re-
ligions that "do not do as the Lord says."

In keeping this belief he says he represents the
"True Primitive Baptist Church", but does not have any connection
with that church, because he believes it has not lived up to
to what the Lord expects of him.



Slave Interview
L. Robinson Baker
Daytona Beach, Florida

Page 3
FIC

He claims the ability to read the future with ease; even to help determine what it will bring in some cases. He reads it in the palms of those who will believe in him; he determines the good and bad luck; freedom from sickness; success in love and other benefits it will bring from the use of charms, roots, herbs and magical incantations and formulas. He has recently celebrated what he believes to be his 80th birthday, and says he expects to live at least another quarter of a century.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Child, (Bernie Wilkins' Child)
Dayton Beach, Fla 322

L. Rebecca Baker
Field Worker
Complete

Carve Interview
January 21, 1957

REFERENCE

I. Personal Interview with John Henry Kemp, Daytona Beach,
Florida

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
9 Pages
1494 Words

Slave Interview
Eatonville, Florida

ARNOLD GRAGSTON

(Verbatim interview with Arnold Gragston, 97-year-old ex-slave whose early life was spent helping slaves to freedom across the Ohio River, while he, himself, remained in bondage. As he puts it, he 'guesses he could be called a 'conductor' on the underground railway, only we didn't call it that then. I don't know as we called it anything - - we just knew there was a lot of slaves always a-wantin' to get free, and I had to help 'em.").

"Most of the slaves didn't know when they was born, but I did. You see, I was born on a Christmas mornin' - - it was in 1840; I was a full grown man when I finally got my freedom.

,"Before I got it, though, I helped a lot of others get theirs. Lawd only knows how many; might have been as much as two-three hundred. It was 'way more than a hundred, I know.

"But that all came after I was a young man - - 'grown' enough to know a pretty girl when I saw one, and to go chasing after her, too. I was born on a plantation that b'longed to Mr. Jack Tabb in Mason County, just across the river in Kentucky.

"Mr. Tabb was a pretty good man. He used to beat us, sure; but not nearly so much as others did, some of his own kin people, even. But he was kinda funny sometimes; he used to have a special slave who didn't have nothin' to do but teach the rest of us - - -



we had about ten on the plantation, and a lot on the other plantations near us - - how to read and write and figger. Mr. Tabb liked us to know how to figger. But sometimes when he would send for us and we would be a long time comin', he would ask us where we had been. If we told him we had been learnin' to read, he would near beat the daylight out of us - - after gettin' somebody to teach us; I think he did some of that so that the other owners wouldn't say he was spoilin' his slaves.

"He was funny about us marryin', too. He would let us go a-courtin' on the other plantations near anytime we liked, if we were good, and if we found somebody we wanted to marry, and she was on a plantation that b'longed to one of his kin folks or a friend, he would swap a slave so that the husband and wife could be together. Sometimes, when he couldn't do this, he would let a slave work all day on his plantation, and live with his wife at night on her plantation. Some of the other owners was always talking about his spoilin' us.

"He wasn't a Dimmacrat like the rest of 'em in the county; he belonged to the 'know-nothin' party' and he was a real leader in it. He used to always be makin' speeches, and sometimes his best friends wouldn't be speaking to him for days at a time.

"Mr. Tabb was always specially good to me. He used to let me go all about - - I guess he had to; couldn't get too much work out of me even when he kept me right under his eyes. I learned fast, too, and I think he kinda liked that. He used to call Sandy Davis, the slave who taught me, 'the smartest Nigger in Kentucky.'

"It was 'cause he used to let me go around in the day and



and night so much that I came to be the one who carried the runnin' away slaves over the river. It was funny the way I started it, too.

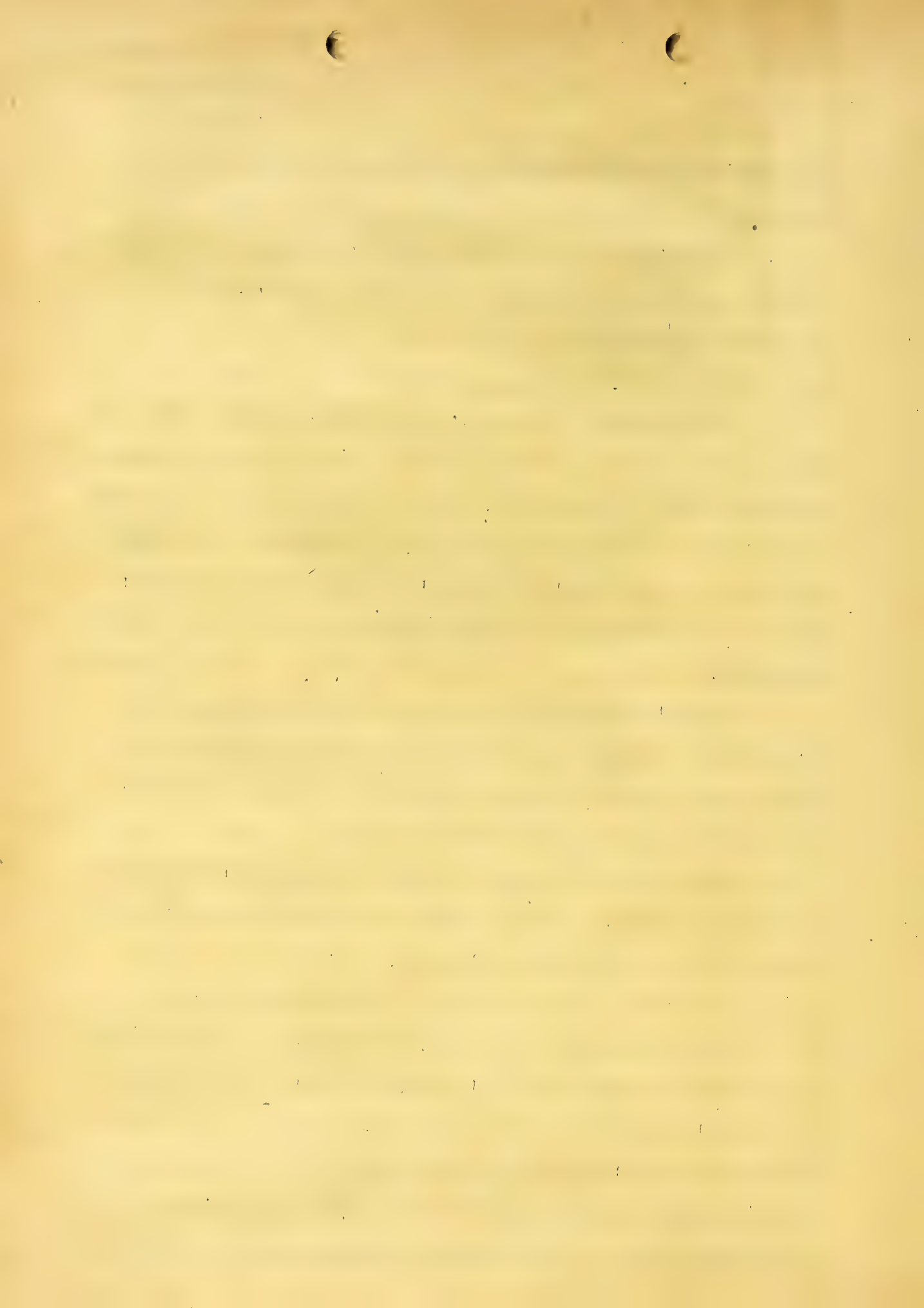
"I didn't have no idea of ever gettin' mixed up in any sort of business like that until one special night. I hadn't even thought of rowing across the river myself.

"But one night I had gone on another plantation 'courtin,' and the old woman whose house I went to told me she had a real pretty girl there who wanted to go across the river and would I take her? I was scared and backed out in a hurry. But then I saw the girl, and she was such a pretty little thing, brown-skinned and kinda rosy, and looking as scared as I was feelin', so it wasn't long before I was listenin' to the old woman tell me when to take her and where to leave her on the other side.

"I didn't have nerve enough to do it that night, though, and I told them to wait for me until tomorrow night. All the next day I kept seeing Mister Tabb laying a rawhide across my back, or shootin' me, and kept seeing that scared little brown girl back at the house, looking at me with her big eyes and asking me if I wouldn't just row her across to Ripley. Me and Mr. Tabb lost, and soon as dust settled that night, I was at the old lady's house.

"I don't know how I ever rowed the boat across the river the current was strong and I was trembling. I couldn't see a thing there in the dark, but I felt that girl's eyes. We didn't dare to whisper, so I couldn't tell her how sure I was that Mr. Tabb or some of the other owners would 'tear me up' when they found out what I had done. I just knew they would find out.

"I was worried, too, about where to put her out of the boat.



I couldn't ride her across the river all night, and I didn't know a thing about the other side. I had heard a lot about it from other slaves but I thought it was just about like Mason County, with slaves and masters, overseers and rawhides; and so, I just knew that if I pulled the boat up and went to asking people where to take her I would get a beating or get killed.

"I don't know whether it seemed like a long time or a short time, now - it's so long ago; I know it was a long time rowing there in the cold and worryin'. But it was short, too, 'cause as soon as I did get on the other side the big-eyed, brown-skin girl would be gone. Well, pretty soon I saw a tall light and I remembered what the old lady had told me about looking for that light and rowing to it. I did; and when I got up to it, two men reached down and grabbed her; I started tremblin' all over again, and prayin'. Then, one of the men took my arm and I just felt down inside of me that the Lord had got ready for me. 'You hungry, Boy?' is what he asked me, and if he hadn't been holdin' me I think I would have fell backward into the river.

"That was my first trip; it took me a long time to get over my scared feelin', but I finally did, and I soon found myself goin' back across the river, with two and three people, and sometimes a whole boatload. I got so I used to make three and four trips a month.

"What did my passengers look like? I can't tell you any more about it than you can, and you wasn't there. After that first girl - - no, I never did see her again - - I never saw my passengers. It would have to be the 'black nights' of the moon when I would carry them, and I would meet 'em out in the open or in a house without a single light. The only way I knew who they were was to ask them; 'What you say?' and



they would answer, "Menare." I don't know what that word meant—it came from the Bible. I only know that that was the password I used, and all of them that I took over told it to me before I took them.

"I guess you wonder what I did with them after I got them over the river. Well, there in Ripley was a man named Mr. Rankins; I think the rest of his name was John. He had a regular station there on his place for escaping slaves. You see, Ohio was a free state and once they got over the river from Kentucky or Virginia, Mr. Rankins could strut them all around town, and nobody would bother 'em. The only reason we used to land 'em quietly at night was so that whoever brought 'em could go back for more, and because we had to be careful that none of the owners had followed us. Every once in a while they would follow a boat and catch their slaves back. Sometimes they would shoot at whoever was trying to save the poor devils.

"Mr. Rankins had a regular 'station' for the slaves. He had a big lighthouse in his yard, about thirty feet high and he kept it burnin' all night. It always meant freedom for a slave if he could get to this light.

"Sometimes Mr. Rankins would have twenty or thirty slaves that had run away on his place at the time. It must have cost him a whole lot to keep them and feed 'em, but I think some of his friends helped him.

"Those who wanted to stay around that part of Ohio could stay, but didn't many of 'em do it, because there was too much danger that you would be walking along free one night, feel a hand over your mouth, and be back across the river and in slavery again in the morning. And nobody in the world ever got a chance to know as much misery as a slave that had escaped and been caught.



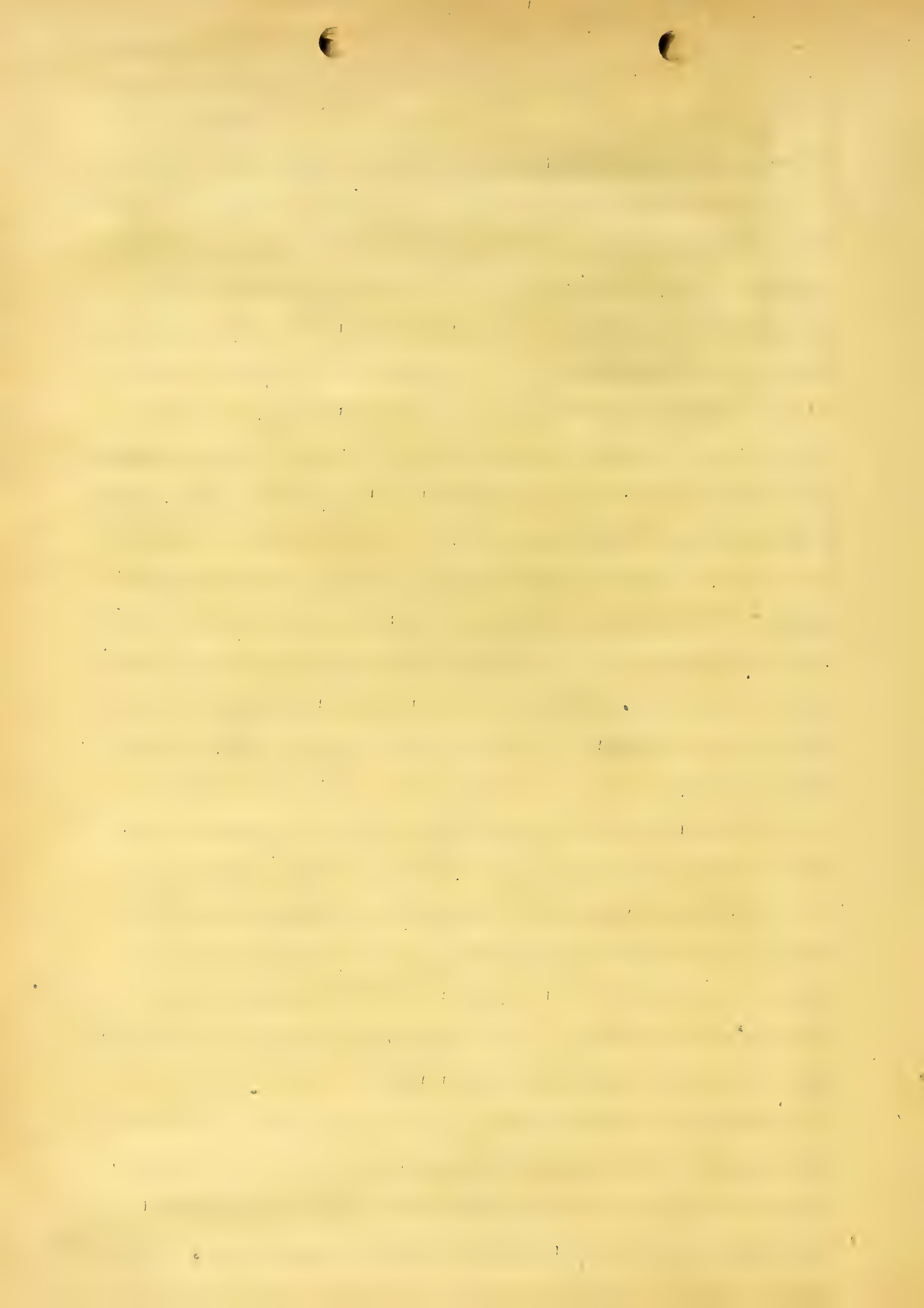
"So a whole lot of 'em went on North to other parts of Ohio, or to New York, Chicago or Canada; Canada was popular then because all of the slaves thought it was the last gate before you got all the way inside of heaven. I don't think there was much chance for a slave to make a living in Canada, but didn't many of 'em come back. They seem like they rather starve up there in the cold than to be back in slavery.

"The Army soon started taking a lot of 'em, too. They could enlist in the Union Army and get good wages, more food than they ever had, and have all the little gals wavin' at 'em when they passed. Them blue uniforms was a nice change, too.

"No, I never got anything from a single one of the people I carried over the river to freedom. I didn't want anything; after I had made a few trips I got to like it, and even though I could have been free any night myself, I figgered I wasn't gettin' along so bad so I would stay on Mr. Tabb's place and help the others get free. I did it for four years.

"I don't know to this day how he never knew what I was doing; I used to take some awful chances, and he knew I must have been up to something; I wouldn't do much work in the day, would never be in my house at night, and when he would happen to visit the plantation where I had said I was goin' I wouldn't be there. Sometimes I think he did know and wanted me to get the slaves away that way so he wouldn't have to cause hard feelins' by freein' 'em.

"I think Mr. Tabb used to talk a lot to Mr. John Fee; Mr. Fee was a man who lived in Kentucky, but Lord! how that man hated slavery! He used to always tell us (we never let our owners see us listenin' to him, though) that God didn't intend for some men to be free and some men be in slavery. He used to talk to the owners, too, when they would



listen to him, but mostly they hated the sight of John Fee.

"In the night, though, he was a different man, for every slave who came through his place going across the river he had a good word, something to eat and some kind of rags, too, if it was cold. He always knew just what to tell you to do if anything went wrong, and sometimes I think he kept slaves there on his place 'till they could be rowed across the river. Helped us a lot.

"I almost ran the business in the gound after I had been carrying the slaves across for nearly four years. It was in 1863, and one night I carried across about twelve on the same night. Somebody must have seen us, because they set out after me as soon as I stepped out of the boat back on the Kentucky side; from that time on they were after me. Sometimes they would almost catch me; I had to run away from Mr. Tabb's plantation and live in the fields and in the woods. I didn't know what a bed was from one week to another. I would sleep in a cornfield to-night, up in the branches of a tree tomorrow night, and buried in a haypile the next night; the River, where I had carried so many across myself, was no good to me; it was watched too close.

"Finally, I saw that I could never do any more good in Mason County, so I decided to take my freedom, too. I had a wife by this time, and one night we quietly slipped across and headed for Mr. Rankin's bell and light. It looked like we had to go almost to China to get across that river; I could hear the bell and see the light on Mr. Rankin's place, but the harder I rowed, the farther away it got, and I knew if I didn't make it I'd get killed. But finally I pulled up by the lighthouse, and went on to my freedom -- just a few months before all of the slaves got their's. I didn't stay in Ripley, though; I wasn't taking no chances. I went on to Detroit and still live there

with most of my 10 children and 31 grandchildren.

"The bigger ones don't care so much about hearin' it now,
but the little ones never get tired of hearin' how their grandpa
brought Emancipation to loads of slaves he could touch and feel,
but never could see."

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GRANDIN, PUTNAM COUNTY
SLAVE INTERVIEW
M.D.RICHARDSON

Interesting tales of the changes that came to the section of Florida that is situated along the Putnam-Clay County lines are told by Neil Coker, old former slave who lives two miles south of Mac Rae, on the road to Grandin. 41

Coker ~~Grandin~~ ^{is} ~~was~~ the son of a slave mother and a ~~white~~ ^{half-Negro} father. His father, he states, was Senator John Wall, who held a seat in the Senate for sixteen years. He was born in Virginia, and received his family name from an old family bearing the same name in that state. He was born, as nearly as he can remember, about 1857.

One of Coker's first reminiscences is of the road on which he still lives. During his childhood it was known as the 'Bellamy Road', so called because it was built, some 132 years ago, by a man of that name who hailed from West Florida.

The 'Bellamy Road' was at one time the main route of traffic between Tallahassee and St. Augustine. (Interestingly enough, the road is at least 30 miles southwest of St. Augustine where it passes through Grandin; the reason for cutting it in such a wide circle, Coker says, was because of the ferocity of the Seminoles in the swamps north and west of St. Augustine).

Wagons, carriages and stages passed along this road in the days before the War Between the States, Coker says. In addition to these he claims to have seen many travellers by foot, and not infrequently furtive escaped slaves, the latter usually under cover



GRANDIN
SLAVE INTERVIEW
M.D.RICHARDSON

of an appropriate background of darkness. 256

The road again came into considerable use during the late days of the War. It was during these days that the Federal troops, both whites and Negroes, passed in seemingly endless procession on their way to or from encounters. On one occasion the former slave recounts having seen a procession of soldiers that took nearly two days to pass; they travelled on horse and afoot. 320

Several amusing incidents are related by the ex-slave of the events of this period. Dozens of the Negro soldiers, he says, discarded their uniforms for the gaudier clothing that had belonged to their masters in former days, and could be identified as soldiers as they passed only with difficulty. Others would pause on their trip at some plantation, ascertain the name of the 'meanest' overseer on the place, then tie him backward on a horse and force him to accompany them. Particularly retributive ~~was~~ were the punishments visited upon Messrs. Mays and Prevatt --- generally recognized as the most vicious slave drivers of the section. 424

Bellamy, Coker says, built the road with slave labor and as an investment, realizing much money on tolls on it for many years. A remarkable feature of the road is that despite its age and the fact that County authorities have permitted its former good grading to deteriorate to an almost-impassable sand at some seasons, there is no mistaking the fact that this ~~was~~ once a major thoroughfare. 44



GRANDIN
SLAVE INTERVIEW
M.D.RICHARDSON

3

The region that stretches from Green Cove Springs in the Northeast to Grandin in the Southwest, the former slave claims, was once dotted with lakes, creeks, and even a river; few of the lakes and none of the other bodies still exist, however.

Among the more notable of the bodies of water was a stream---- he does not now remember its name ---- that ran for about 20 miles in an Easterly direction from Starke. This stream was one of the fastest that the former slave can remember having seen in Florida; its power was utilized for the turning of a power mill which he believes ground corn or other grain. The falls in the river that turned the water mill, he states, was at least five or six feet high, and at one point under the Falls a man named (or possibly nicknamed) "Yankee" operated a sawmill. Coker believes that this mill, too, derived its power from the little stream. He says that the stream has been extinct since he reached manhood. It ended in 'Scrub Pond', beyond Grandin and Starke.

Some of the names of the old lakes of the section were these: "Brooklyn Lake"; Magnolia Lake; Soldier Pond (near Keystone); Half-Moon Pond, near Putnam Hall; Hick's Lake, and others. On one of them was the large grist mill of 'Dr. McCray'; Coker suggests that this might be the origin of the town of McRae of the present period.

To add to its natural water facilities, Coker points out, Bradford County also had a canal. This canal ran from the interior of the county to the St. John's River near Green Cove Springs, and

GRANDIN
SLAVE INTERVIEW
M.D. RICHARDSON

4

with Mandarin on the other side of the river still a major shipping point, the canal handled much of the commerce of Bradford and Clay counties. 752

Coker recalls vividly the Indians of the area in the days before 1870. These he claims to have been friendly, but reserved, fellows; he does not recall any of the Indian women.

Negro slaves from the region around St. Augustine and what is now Hastings used to escape and use Bellamy's Road on their way to the area about Micanopy. It was considered equivalent to freedom to reach that section, with its friendly Indians and impenetrable forests and swamps. 83

The little town of Melrose probably had the most unusual name of ~~the~~ all the strange ones prevalent at the time. It was called, very simply, 'Shake-Rag'. Coker makes no effort to explain the appellation. 165

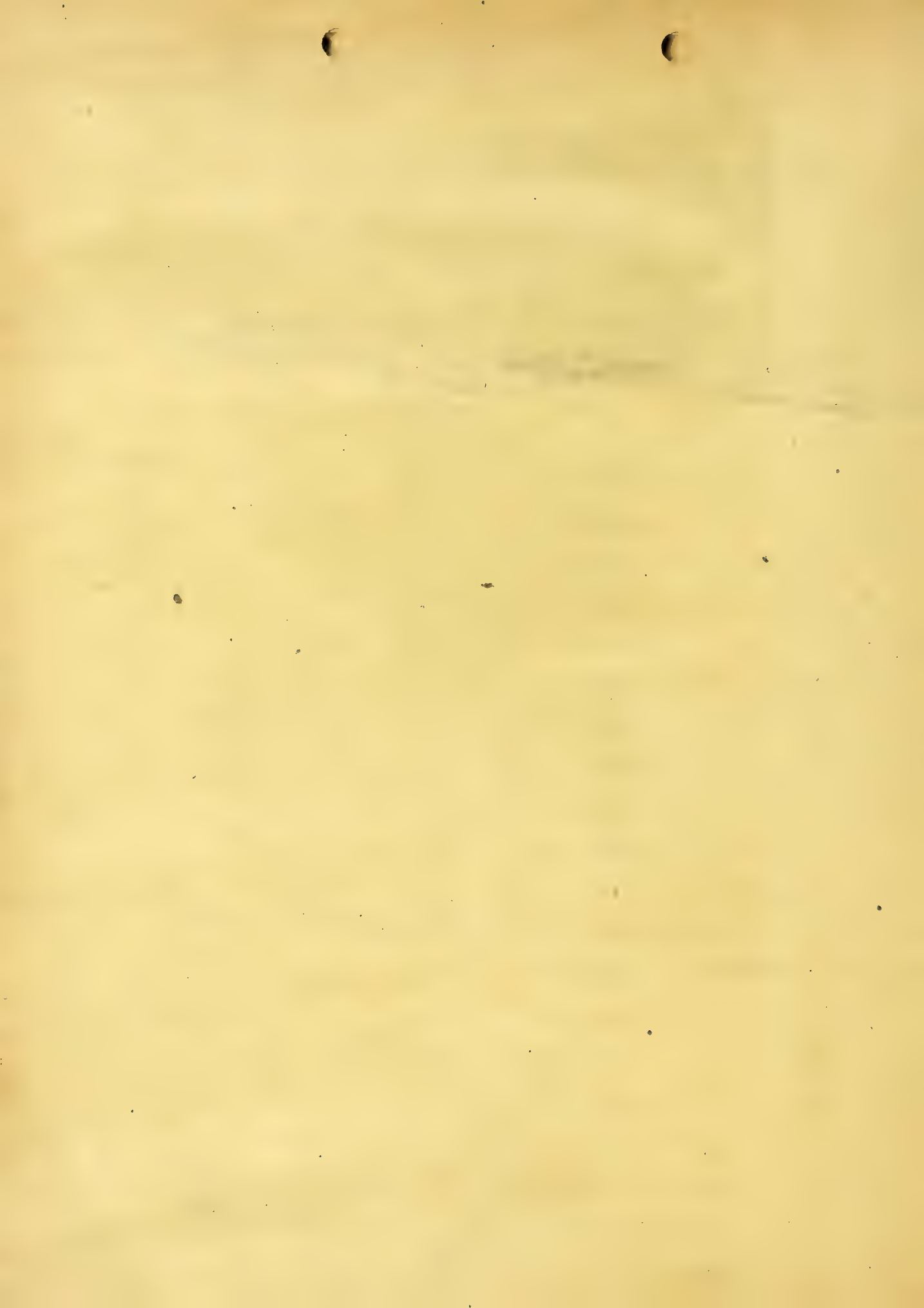
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GRANDIN
SLAVE INTERVIEW
M.D.RICHARDSON

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Interview with subject, Neil Coker, Grandin, Putnam Co.,
April, 1937. Interview by Field Workers, Federal Writers Project.

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REDAI. WHITE'S PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida.

Rachel Austin
Secretary
Complete
6 Pages
1,343 Words

Slave Interview
Jacksonville

YOUNG WINSTON DAVIS

Young Winston Davis states that he was born in Ozark, Alabama, June 23, 1885 on the plantation of Charles Davis who owned about seven hundred slaves and was considered very wealthy. Kindness and consideration for his slaves, made them love him.

Reverend Davis was rather young during his years in slavery but when he was asked to tell something about the days of slavery, replied: "I remember many things about slavery, but know they will not come to me now; anyway, I'll tell what I can think of."

He tells of the use of iron pots, fireplaces with rods used to hold the pots above the fire for cooking peas, rice, vegetables, meats, etc.; the home-made coffee from meal, spring and well water, tanning cowhide for leather, spinning of thread from cotton and the weaving looms.

"There was no difference," he states, "in the treatment of men and women for work; my parents worked very hard and women did some jobs that we would think them crazy for trying now; why my mother helped build a railroad before she was married to my father. My mother's first husband was sold away from her; oh, yes, some of the masters didn't care how they treated husbands, wives, parents and children; any of them might be separated from the other. A good price for a 'nigger' was \$1500 on down and if one was what was called a stallion (healthy), able to get plenty children, he would bring about \$2500.



"They had what was called legal money - I did have some of it but guess it was burned when I lost my house by fire a few years ago.

"Now, my master had three boys and two girls; his wife, Elizabeth, was about like the ordinary missus; Master Davis was good, but positive; he didn't allow other whites to bother his slaves.

"When the war came, his two boys went first. Finally Master Davis went; he and one son never returned.

"The Yankees killed cows, etc., as they went along but did not destroy any property 'round where I was.

"We had preachers and doctors, but no schools; the white preachers told us to obey and would read the Bible (which we could not understand) and told us not to steal eggs. Most of the doctors used herbs from the woods and "Aunt Jane" and "Uncle Bob" were known for using "Samson's Snake Root, "Devil's shoe-string" for stomach troubles and "low-bud turtle" for fever; that's good now, chile, if you can get it.

"The 'nigger' didn't have a chance to get in politics during slavery, but after Emancipation, he went immediately into the Republican Party; a few into the Democratic Party; there were many other parties, too.

"The religions were Methodist and Baptist; my master was Baptist and that's what I am; we could attend church but dare not try to get any education, less we punished with stripes.

"There are many things I remember just like it was yesterday - the general punishment was with straps - some of the slaves suffered terribly on the plantations; if the master was poor and had few slaves he was mean - the more wealthy or more slaves he had, the better he was. In some cases it was the general law that made some of the masters as they were; as, the law required them to have an overseer or foreman (he



was called "boss man") by the 'niggers' and usually came from the lower or poorer classes of whites; he didn't like 'niggers' usually, and took authority to do as he pleased with them at times. Some plantations preferred and did have 'nigger riders' that were next to the overseer or foreman, but they were liked better than the foreman and in many instances were treated like foremen but the law would not let them be called "foremen." Some of the masters stood between the 'nigger riders' and foremen and some cases, the 'nigger' was really boss.

"The punishments, as I said were cruel - some masters would hang the slaves up by both thumbs so that their toes just touched the floor, women and men, alike. Many slaves ran away; others were forced by their treatment to do all kinds of mean things. Some slaves would dig deep holes along the route of the "Trotters" and their horses would fall in sometimes breaking the leg of the horse, arm or leg of the rider; some slaves took advantage of the protection their masters would give them with the overseer or other plantation owners, would do their devilment and "fly" to their masters who did not allow a man from another plantation to bother his slaves. I have known pregnant women to go ten miles to help do some devilment. My mother was a very strong woman (as I told you she helped build a railroad), and felt that she could whip any ordinary man, could not get a passport unless she felt like it; once when caught on another plantation without a passport, she had all of us with her, made all of the children run, but wouldn't run herself - somehow she went upstream, one of the man's horse's legs was broken and she told him "come and get me" but she knew the master allowed no one to come on his place to finish his slaves.

"My father was a blacksmith and made the chains used for stocks, (like handcuffs), used on legs and hands. The slaves were forced to lay



flat on their backs and were chained from the boardwalk for that purpose; they were left there for hours, sometimes through rain and cold; he might 'holler' and groan but that did not always get him released.

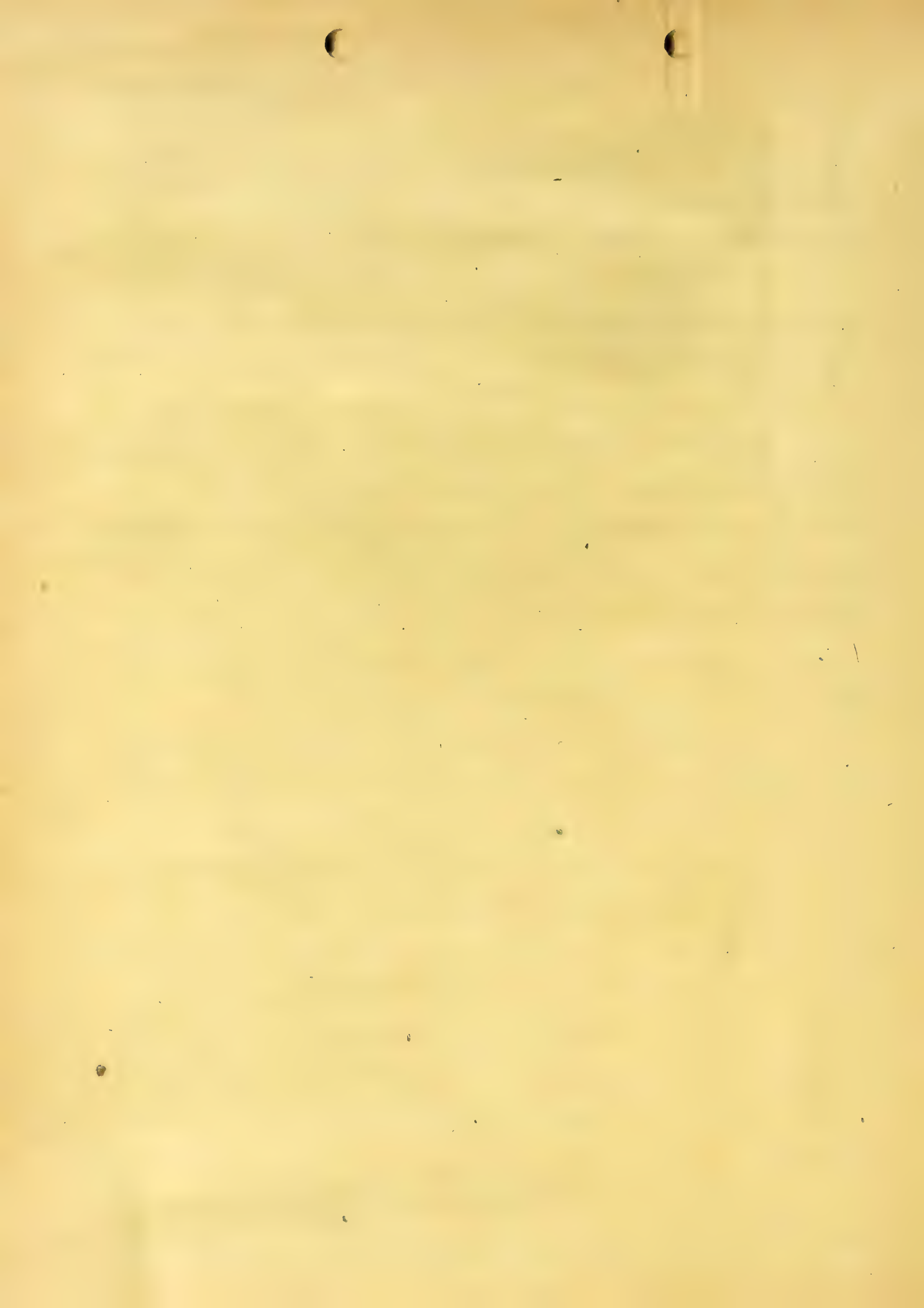
"The race became badly mixed then; some Negro women were forced into prostitution, some were beaten almost to death because they refused. The Negro men dare not bother or even speak to some of their women.

"In one instance an owner of a plantation threatened a Negro rider's sweetheart; she told him and he went crying to this owner who in turned threatened him and probably did hit the woman; straight to his master this sweetheart went and when he finished his story, his master immediately took his team and drove to the other plantation - drove so fast that one of his horse's dropped dead; when the owner came out he levelled his double-barrel shotgun at him and shot him dead. No, sah; some masters did not allow you to bother their slaves.

"A peculiar case was that of Old Jim who lived on another plantation was left to look out for the fires and do other chores around the house while 'master' was at war. A bad rumor spread, and do you know those mean devils, overseers of nearby plantations came out and got her dug a deep hole, and despite her cries, buried her up to her neck - nothing was left out but her head and hair. A crowd of young 'nigger boys' saw it all and I was one among the crowd that helped dig her out.

"Oh, there's a lots more I know but can't just get it together. My mother's name was Caroline and my father Patrick; all took the name of Davis from our master. There were thirteen children - I am the only one alive."

Mr. Davis appears well preserved for his age; he has most of his teeth and is slightly gray; his health seems to be good, although he is



a cripple and uses a cane for walking always; this condition he believes is the result of an attack of rheumatism.

He is a preacher and has pastored in Alabama, Texas and Florida. He has had several years of training in public schools and under ministers.

He has lived in Jacksonville since 1918 coming here from Milledgeville, Georgia.

He was married for the first and only time during his 62 years of life to Mrs. Lizzie P. Brown, November 19, 1885. There are no children. He gives no reason for remaining single, but his reason for marrying was "to give some lady the privilege and see how it feels to be called husband."



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel Austin
Secretary
Complete
6 pages

Slave Interview
Young Winston Davis

REFERENCE

1. Interview with Young Winston Davis, 742 W. 10th Street, Jacksonville
Florida.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Guide. (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel Austin
Secretary
Complete
1,374 Words
6 Pages

Slave Interview
April 16, 1937

Clayborn Cantling

Clayborn Cantling was born in Jackson, Georgia, Terrell County, January 20, 1842 on the plantation of Judge Williams.

Judge Williams owned 102 heads of slaves and was known to be "tolable nice to 'em in some ways and pretty rough on 'em in other ways" says Mr. Cantling. "He would 'nt gi' us no coffee, 'cept on Sunday mornings when we would have shorts or biscuits of wheat, which is de hardest of flour at all, ya' know, but we had plenty bread, corn bread, taters and peas.

"As a child I never have to tote water to de old people on de farm and tend de cows an' feed de sheep. Now, I can't say right 'nearly how things was during it, very 'cause its been a long time ago but we had cotton and corn fields and de hands plowed land, planted crops, planted rowders, gathered peas and done all the other hard work to be done on de plantation. I was not big 'nuff to do all of dese things but I could plenty of it then.

"They made lye soap on de farm and used lard for wash for de. We niggers slept on hay piled on top of planks but de white folks had better beds.

"I dont 'member my grandparents but my ma was called Harriet Williams and my pa was called Henry Williams; dey was called Williams after my master. My ma and pa worked very hard and got some beatings but

I don't know what for. They was all kinds of money, five and ten dollar bills, and so on then, but I didn't ever see them with any.

"When war came along and Sherman came through the old people was very scared on account of the white owners but there was no fighting close to me. My master's sons Lee and Fletcher joined the army and lots of de other masters went; de co vants was sent along to wait on de young white men. Guess you'd like to know if any were killed. 'I should wile,' but I know were killed.

"During these days for medicine, the old people used such things as butterfly root and butterfly tea, cane tea, red oak bark, birch bark - something that grow - was used for fevers and bathing children. They was white doctors and plenty of colored grannies,

"When de Yankees came they acted different and was naturally better to servants than our masters had been; no colored folks drew the beat we could but that was not so good right after freedom. Still it grew on and grew on getting better.

"Before freedom we always went to white churches on Sundays with passes but they never mentioned God; they always told us to be 'good niggers and mind our masters and masters."

"Judge Will Ison had ten or twelve heads of children but I can't 'member the names of 'em now; his wife was called Mrs. 'Manda and she was jes' 'bout lak Nurse Williams. I had 'bout eighteen heads of boys and five girls myself; dere was so many, I can't 'member all of dem."

Mr. Gentling was asked to relate some incidents that he could remember of the lives of slaves, and he continued:

"Well, the horn would blow every morning for you to get up and go right to work; when the sun ris' if you were out in the field working, you would be whipped with whips and leather straps. I 'member Aunt Betsey was

beat until she could hardly get it up, but I can't remember just how but do you know she had to work along till she got better. My ma had to work pretty hard but my oldest sister, Judy, was too young to work much.

"A heap o' de slaves would run away and hide in de woods to keep from working so hard but de white folks to keep them from running away so that they could not catch 'em would put a chain around the neck which would hang down the back and be fastened on to another 'round the waist and another 'round the foot so they could not run, still they had to work and sleep in 'em, too; sometimes they would wear these chains for three or four weeks.

"When a slave would die they had wooden boxes to put 'em in and they looked real just put them in. A slave might go to a sister or brother's funeral.

"My recollection is very bad and so much is forgotten, but I have seen slaves sold in droves like cows; they called 'em 'raffiness,' and white men was drivin' 'em like hogs and cows for sale. Mothers and fathers were sold and parted from their children; they was sold to white people in diffant states. I tell you child, it was awful, but God did not let it last always. I have heard slaves morning and night pray for deliverance. Some of 'em would stand up in de fields or bend over cotton and turn and pray out loud for God to help 'em and in time you see, He did.

"They had what you call "patrollers" who would catch you from home and 'wear you out' and send you back to your master. If a master had slaves he jes' could not rule (some of 'em was hard and jes' would not mind de laws), he would get him if he wanted to go to another plantation and if he said he did, then, he would give him a pass and that pass would read: "Give this nigger hell." Of course when the "patrollers" or other plan-

tation boss would read the pass he would beat him nearly to death and send him back. Of course the nigger could not read and did not know what the pass said. You see, day did not 'low no nigger to have a book or piece of paper of any kind and you know day was not go teach any of 'em to read.

"De women had it hard too; women with little babies would have to go to work in de mornings with the rest, come back, nurse their chillun and go back to the field, stay two or three hours then go back and eat dinner; after dinner day would have to go to de field and stay two or three more hours then go and nurse the chillun again, go back to the field and stay till night. One or maybe two old women would stay in a big house and keep all de chillun while their mothers worked in de fields.

"Now day is a heap more I could tell maybe but I dont think of no more now."

Mr. Cantling came to Florida to Jennings Plantation near Lake Park and stayed two years, then went to Everett's Plantation and stayed one year. From there he went to a place called High Hill and stayed two or three years. He left there and went to Jasper, farmed and stayed until he moved his family to Jacksonville. Here he worked on public works until he started raising hogs and chickens which he continued up to about fourteen years ago. Now, he is too old to do anything but just 'sit around and talk and eat."

He lives with his daughter, Mrs. Minnie Holly and her husband, Mr. Dan Holly on Lee Street.

Mr. Cantling cannot read or write, but is very interesting.

He has been a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church for more than fifty years.

He has a very good appetite and although has lost his teeth, he

has never worn a plate or had any dental work done. He is never sick and has had but little medical attention during his lifetime. His form is bent and he walks with a cane; although his going is confined to his home, it is from choice as he seldom wears shoes on account of bad feet. His eyesight is very good and his hobby is sewing. He threads his own needles without assistance of glasses as he has never worn them.

Mr. Cantling celebrated his 89th birthday on the 20th day of November 1936.

He is very small, also very short; quite active for his age and of a very genial disposition, always smiling.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Page 6
Slave Interview

Rachel Austin
Secretary
Complete

REFERENCE

1. Interview with Mr. Clayborn Cantling, 1350 Lee Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

Slave Interview
By Rachel Austin

Clayborn Gantling was born in Dawson, Georgia, Terrell County, January 20, 1848 on the plantation of Judge Williams.

Judge Williams owned 102 heads of slaves and was known to be "tolable nice to 'em in some ways and pretty rough on 'em in other ways," says Mr. Gantling. "He wouldn't gi' us no coffee, 'cept on Sunday Mornings when we would have shorts or seconds of wheat, which is de leavins' of flour at mills, yu' know, but we had plenty bacon, corn bread, taters and peas.

"As a child I uster have to tote water to de old people on de farm and tend de cows an' feed de sheep. Now, I can say right zactly how things wuz during slavery 'cause its been a long time ago but we had cotton and corn fields and de hands plowed hard, picked cotton, grabbedled penders, gathered peas and done all the other hard work to be done on de plantations. I wuz not big enough to do all of dem things but I seed plent of it done.

"Dey made lye soap on de farms and used indigo from wood for dye. We niggers slept on hay piled on top of plans but de white folks had better beds.

"I dont 'member my grænd parents but my ma was called Harriet Williams and my pa was called Henry Williams; dey wuz called Williams after my master. My ma and pa worked very hard and got some beatings but I dont know what for. Dey wuz all kinds of money, five and ten dollar bills, and so on then, but I didn't ever see them with any.

"When war came along and Sherman came through the old people wuz very skeered on account of the white owners but there was no fighting close to me. My master's sons Lee and Fletcher joined the army and lots of de other masters went; de servants wuz sent along to wait on de young white men. Guess you'd like to know if any were killed. 'I should smile' two I know were killed.

"During those days for medicine, the old people used such things as butterfly root and butterfly tea, sage tea, red oak bark, hippecat -something

that grow - was used for fevers and bathing children. They wuz white doctors and plenty of colored grannies.

"When de Yankees came they acted diffunt and was naturally better to servants than our masters had been; we colored folks done the best we could but that was not so good right after freedom. Still it growed on and growed on getting better.

"Before freedom we always went to white churches on Sundays with passes but they never mentioned God; they always told us to "be good niggers and mind our missus and masters."

"Judge Williams had ten or twelve heads of children but I cant 'member the names of them now; his wife was called Mis' 'Manda and she was jes' 'bout lak Marse Williams. I had 'bout eighteen heads of boys and five girls myself; dere was so many, I cant 'member all of dem."

Mr. Gantling was asked to relate some incidents that he could remember of the lives of slaves; and he continued:

"Well, the horn would blow every morning for you to git up and go right to work; when the sun ris' if you were not in the field working, you wold be whipped with whips and leather strops. I 'member Aunt Betsy was beat until she could harldy get along, but I cant 'member what for but do you know she had to work along till she got better. My ma had to work pretty hard but my oldest sister Judy, was too young to work much.

"A heap o' de slaves would run away and hide in de woods to keep from working so hard but the white folks to keep them from running away so that they could not ketch 'em would put a chain around the neck which would hang down the back and be fastened on to another 'round the waist and another 'round the feet so they could not run, still they had to work and sleep in 'em too; sometimes they would wear these chains for three or four months.

"When a slave would die they had wooden boxes to put 'em in and dug holes and just put them in. A slave might go to a sister or brother's funeral.

"My recollection is very bad and so much is forgotten, but I have seen slaves sold in droves like cows; they called 'em 'ruffigees,' and white men wuz drivin' 'em like hogs and cows for sale. Mothers and fathers were sold and parted from their chillun; they wuz sold to white people in diffunt states. I tell you chile, it was pitiful, but God did not let is last always. I have heard slaves morning and night pray for deliverance. Some of 'em would stand up in de fields or bend over cotton and corn and pray out loud for God to help 'em and in time you see, He did.

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Mr. Gantling will pass his 89th birthday on the 20th day of this month.

Very small and short in size, very active for his age and of a very genial disposition, is Mr. Gantling. (1)



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Jacksonville, Fla.

Viola B. Muse
Field Worker
Complete
1,315 Words
6 Pages

SLAVE INTERVIEW
January 11, 1937.

AN EX-SLAVE WHO WENT TO AFRICA

Anna Scott, an ex-slave who now lives in Jacksonville near the intersection of Moncrief and Bignood Avenues, was a member of one of the first colonization groups that went to the West coast of Africa following the emancipation of the slaves in this country.

The former slave was born at Love City, South Carolina, on Jan. 28, 1848, of a half-breed characterful Negro mother and a white father. Her father owned the plantation adjoining that of her master.

When she reached the adolescent age Anna was placed under the direct care of her mistress, by whom she was given direct charge of the dining-room and entrusted with the keys to the provisions and supplies of the household.

A kindred love grew between the slave girl and her mistress; she recalls that everywhere her mistress went she was taken along. He was kept in 'the big house'. She was not given any education, though, as some of the slaves on nearby plantations were.

Religion was not denied to the former slave and her fellows. Mrs. Abigail Dever, her owner, permitted the slaves to attend revival and other services. The slaves were allowed to occupy the

balcony of the church in Dove City, while the whites occupied the main floor. The slaves were forbidden to sing, talk, or make any other sound, however, under penalty of severe beatings.

Those of the slaves who 'felt the sperrit' during a service must keep silence until after the service, when they could 'tell it to the deacon', a colored man who would listen to the confessions or professions of religion of the slaves until late into the night. The Negro deacon would relay his converts to the white minister of the church, who would meet them in the vestry room at some specified time.

Some of the questions that would be asked at these meetings in the vestry room would be:

"What did you come up here for?"

"Because I got religion".

"How do you know you got religion?"

"Because I know my sins are forgiven".

"How do you know your sins are forgiven?"

"Because I love Jesus and I love everybody".

"Do you want to be baptized?"

"Yes sir."

"Why do you want to be baptized?"

"Cause it will make me like Jesus wants me to be".

When several persons were 'ready', there would be a baptism

in a nearby creek or river. After this, slaves would be permitted to hold occasional servives of their own in the log house that was sometimes used as a school.

Mrs. Scott remembers vividly the joy that she felt and other slaves expressed when first news of their emancipation was brought to them. Both she and her mistress were fearful, she says; her mistress because she did not know what she would do without her slaves, and Anna because she thought the Union soldiers would harm Mrs. Dove. When the chief officer of the soldiers came to the home of her mistress, she says, he demanded entrance in a gruff voice. Then he saw a ring upon Mrs. Dove's finger and asked: "where did you get this?" When told that the ring belonged to her husband, who was dead, the officer turned to his soldiers and told them that they should 'get back; she's alright!"

Provisions intended for the Confederate armies were broken open by the Union soldiers and their followers, and Anna's mother, to protect her master, organized groups of slaves to 'tote the meat from the box cars and hide it in dugouts under the mistress' house'. This meat was later divided between Negroes and whites.

A Provost Judge followed the advance of the army, and he obtained a list of all of the slaves held by each master. Mrs. Dove gave her list to the official, who called each slave by name and asked what that slave had done on the plantation. He asked, also, whether any payment had been made to them since the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed, and when answered in the neg-

ative told them that 'You are free now and must be paid for all of the work you have done since the Proclamation was signed and that you will do in the future. Don't you work for anybody without pay'.

The Provost Judge also told the slaves that they might leave if they liked, and Anna was among those who left. She went to visit the husband of her mother in Charleston. With her mother and five other children, Anna crossed rivers on log rafts and rode on trains to Charleston.

Elias Mumford was Anna's step-father in Charleston, and after spending a year there with him the entire family joined a colonizing expedition to West Africa. There were 650 in the expedition, and it left in 1867. Transportation was free.

The trip took several weeks, but finally the small ship landed at Brass Bassa. Mumford did not like the place, however, and continued on to Monrovia, Liberia. He did not like Monrovia, either, and tried several other ports before being told that he would have to get off, anyway. This was at Harper Cape, W. Africa.

Here he almost immediately began an industry that was to prove lucrative. Oysters were 'large as saucers', according to Anna, and while the family gathered these he would burn them and extract lime from them. This he mixed with the native clay and made brick. In addition to his brick-making Mumford cut trees for lumber, and with his own brick and lumber would construct houses and structures. One such structure brought him \$1100.00.



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Viola B. Muse
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Another manner in which Mumford added to his growing wealth was through the cashing of checks for the Missionaries of the section. Ordinarily they would have to send these back to the United States to be cashed, and when he offered to cash them -- at a discount -- they eagerly utilized the opportunity to save time; this was a convenience for them and more wealth for Mumford.

Anna found other things besides happiness in her eight years in Africa. There were death, sickness, and pestilences. She mentions among the latter the African ants, some of which reached huge proportions. Most dreaded were the Mission ants, which infested every house, building and structure. Sometimes buildings had to be burned to get rid of them. The bite of these ants was so serious that after sixty years Anna still exhibits places on her feet where the ants left their indelible traces. Another of the ant pests was the Driver ant, so large, powerful and stubborn that even bodies of water did not stop them. They would join themselves together above the surface of the water and serve as bridge for the passage of the other ants. The Driver ants moved in swarms and their approach could be seen at great distances. When they were seen to be coming toward a settlement the natives would close their doors and windows and build fires around their homes to avoid them. These fires had to be kept burning for weeks.

Eight and more persons died a day from the African fever during the early colonization attempts; three of those in Anna's family alone were victims of it. It was generally believed that

Slave Interview
Viola B. Muse
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if a victim of the fever became wet by dew he was sure to die.

After eight years Mumford and the remainder of his family returned to America, where the accrued checks he possessed for cashing made him reasonably wealthy. Anna married Robert Scott and moved to Jacksonville, where she has lived since.

At ninety-one she still occupies the little farm on the outskirts of Jacksonville that was purchased with the money left to her out of her mother's inheritance (from the African transactions of Mumford) and Robert's post-slavery savings, and in front of her picturesque little cottage spins yarns for the neighbors of her early experiences.

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Slave Interview
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Jacksonville

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Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel A. Austin
Field Worker
Consists
2,066 Words
8 Pages

Slave Interview
December 5, 1936

Margaret Nickerson

In her own vernacular, Margaret Nickerson was "born to William A. Carr, on his plantation near Jackson, Leon County, many years ago."

When questioned concerning her life on the plantation, she continues: "Now honey, its been so long ago, I don't remember ev'yt'ing, but I will tell you what I kin as near right as possible; I kin 'member five of Wm Carr's children; Florida, Susan, 'Lijah, Willie and Tom; Wm Carr never 'lowed us to have a piece of paper in our hands."

"Mr. Wilson was de first overseer I 'member; I was big enough to take meat an' stuff from de smokehouse to de kitchen and to take water to and get wood for cooking to cook de dinner and for de milk-lins who milked de milkins, an' I carried dinner back to de house."

"On de plantation dere was 'bout a hundred slaves; working; we dere in de kitchen in three parts and de whole was plenty of peas, greens, cornbread dere no's for coffee- when de overseer brought some coffee for us; we get water from de open well. Jee 'fess de big gun fitted dey fetched my pa from de way when he was small; he had heard dey say 'de Yankees is coming and was so glad."



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Rachel A. Austin
Jacksonville, Florida

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" Dere was rice, cotton, co'n tatter fields to be
tended to and cowhides to be tanned, thread to be spinned, and
things was made into ropes for plow lines."

" Ole Harree Carr fed us, but he did not care what we
wore, jes so you wold not worry and when yo' made five and six
brice a' cotton, said: 'Ye' ain don' nuthin'."

" When de big man fished on a Saturday he said Carr and
Hinnie Howard was settin' up co'n for de plowmen to come 'long
and put dirt to 'em; Carr wold de free papers to us on Sunday and
de co'n and cotton had to be tanned so he told us he was goin' to
git' us de rat proceeds (that was de chickens), what tanned out to be
de co'n and cotton stalks. Den he asked dem what would stay wid him
to stop off on de right and den was leavin' to stop off on de
left."

" My pa made some firm when wintin' new ground- he
took a hammer to put de stakes in, wold a little while since de
put de stakes in and yo'ed water on it to drip; at night after git-
tin' off from work he'd put in de ground and wold de crop- I wold it
sometime and I make it now, myself."

" My sister-in-law wold make some cowhides for de tan-
ner's on de plantation and I wold ev'body on de plantation 'cept ole
Harree and his family; dey's was diffant, fine."

My granma was Phoebe Austin- my mother was Sarah Rachel
Jackson and my pa was Edward Jackson; my mother and granma



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Rachel A. Austin
Jacksonville, Florida

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Robert and Joe was 'told' from Virginia and fetched here. I can't
know no niggers dat 'listed in de war; I don't 'member none 'bout
de war only when de started talking 'bout drill in' men for de
war, Joe Sanders was a lieutenant. James Carr's son, Tom and
Willie went in de war."

"We didn't had no doctors, only de grumblers; we
couldn't send Hippocrit (ironic) for medicine."

"As I said, Hilgo was de first overseer I 'member',
than Sanders was next and Joe Sanders after him; John U. Harwood
came in after Sanders and when de big gun fished old man Harwood
was here. I never saw a nigger sold, but dey carried dem from
our house and I never seen 'em no more."

"We had a doctor wid de white promethere and dey told us
to find our masters and slaves and we would be saved; if not, dey
said we wouldn't. Dey never told us nothing 'bout Jesus. On Sunday
after working hard all de week dey would say down to sleep and be so
tired; soon as yo' 'd sleep, de overseer would come in' wake you up
and make you go to church."

"When de big gun fished old man Carr had six weeks of
confederate money what he was carrying wid him to Athens Georgia and
all de time if any of us said what he was an' ex his 'nigger please
give me some money' (then she raised her voice to a high, pitiful tone)
he says 'I ain't got a cent' and right den he would have a shile so



Slave Interview
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Jacksonville, Florida

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full it would make a whole people by slaves to save it. He had plenty corn, wheat, potatoes, hogs, cows everything, but he didn't give us nuthin but strong plain clothes and plenty to eat; we slept in old corn on beds and my pa made up little cribs and put hay in them for the children."

"Now if you wanted to hear in old Master Carr don't keep you close in the field and leave 'em- he'd beat you; you must tell you about five or six fields to do together, didn't a dog not be between you. He'd say 'You gun-headed devil, sharpen' you' shoes and get 'em over the field.'"

"Now Joe didn't, I want tell you all I can, but I want to tell it right; well now, I don't want make no mistakes and I don't want lie on nobody- I can't say now and I know taint no use to lie, I tell my time. I don't pretend to get all the money that I say he got and I ain't gonna tell no lie for me and I ain't gonna tell no lie on me. I ain't never used no slaves sold by Master Carr, he was always telling me he was gonna sell me but he never did- he sold my pa's first wife there."

"Dad was Uncle George Hall, he could read and write and could do white folks didn't let no nigger what could read and write. Carr's wife Miss Jane Master teach us Sunday School but she didn't let 'em us to teach a book with us books. De day Master Joe was Uncle George Hall and beat him for nothing; day would beat him and take him to de lake and put him on a log and shave him in de lake, but he always swished out. When day didn't do dat day would beat him tal de blood run



Slave Interview
Michael A. Austin
Jacksonville, Florida

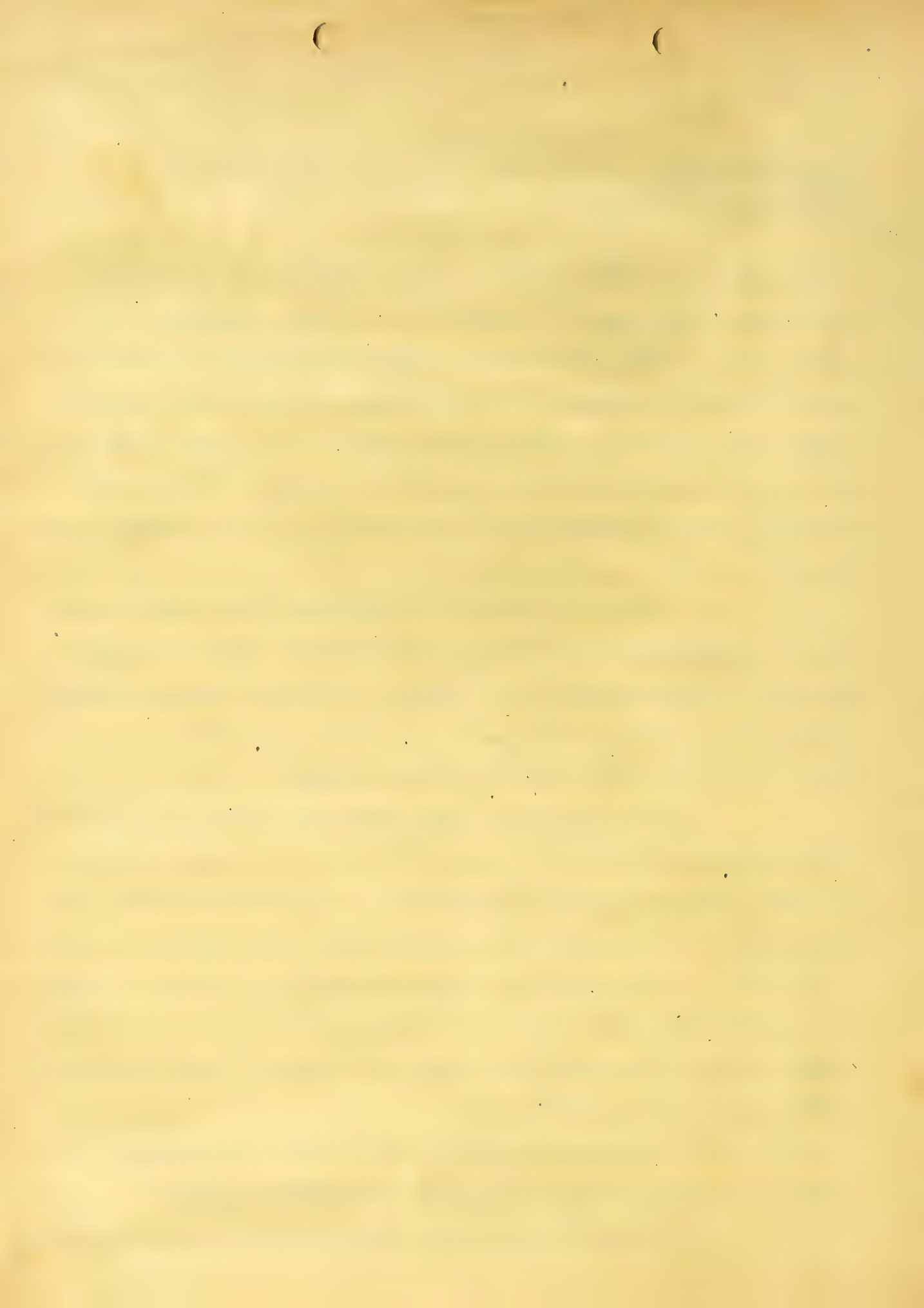
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FRC

outen him and den trow him in de ditch in de field and kiver
him up wid dirt, dead wid yere and den stick a stick up at his
head. I was a water tater and had stood and seen us do him dat way
more'n once and I stood and looked at us dat day went 'way to de
other row den I grabbed de dirt off his head and he'd push de
dirt off and say 'thank ye', git his hoe and go on back to work. Dey
beat him lak dat and he didn't do a thing to 'em lak dat sort of treat-
ment."

" I had a sister name Lytia Holly who was a slave
back on non' us; when dey'd git behin' her, she'd git behin'
den; she was dat stubbo'n and when dey would beat her she wouldn't
holler but jus take it and go on. I got some shuppin's wid straps
but I wanta tell you why I am orrible today:

" I had to tote tater vines on my back, we had tater
rick and de har's would be a gallop' for us all over de field. But
you know honey, de way we was to go to all us at once, so
Jas. Sanders we id hurry us up by beatin' us with straps and sticks
and run us all over de later ridge; he would us beat us and den
we wouldn't git to all us. At last my pa would try to fix us up
some I had to go back to work 'er day. I never walked straight from
dat day to dis and I have to eat hard in dis chair now, but I don't
feel and none now. I feels good and wants to go to be'w- I ain't
never tel no lie on white nor black ones taint no use."

"Some us de slaves run away, lots us us. Some would be



Slave Interview
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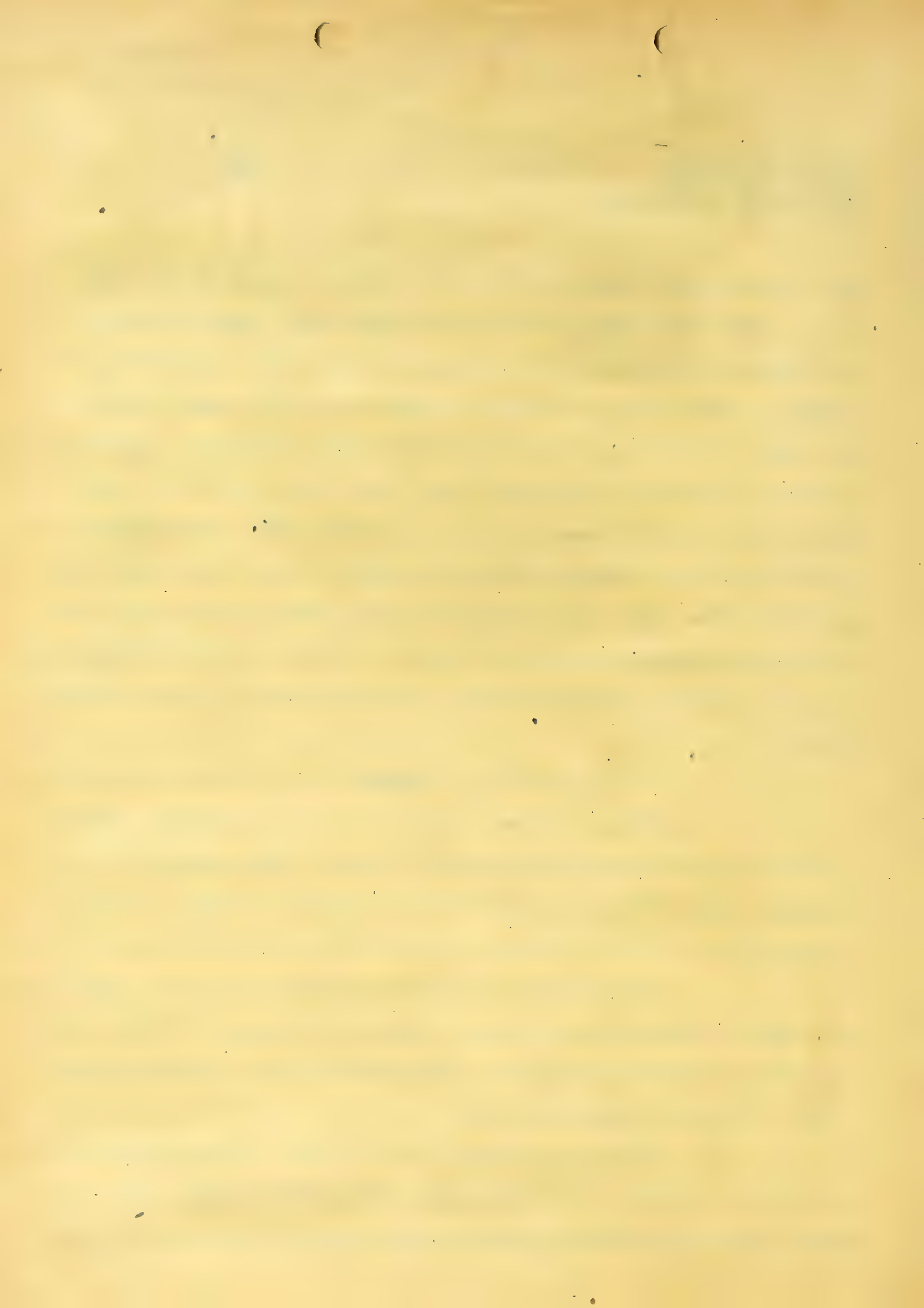
set and when dey katched em dey put bells on em; fust dey would put a iron band 'round dey neck and another one 'round de waist and sivet us together down de back; de bell would hang on de leg 'round de neck so dat it would ring when de slave walked and dey wouldn't git 'way. Some of dem wore dem bells 'round de neck and fust 'bout 's and when dey stood up dey would take em off 'em. John Overstreet, George Hall, John Green, Hubert Gilder, Jim Bradley and a hoo' or others wore dem bells. Dis is what I know, not what nobody else say. I seen dis myself. In witness, when de big gun fished, de runaway slaves come out in woods from all directions. We was in de field when it fished, but I 'member dey was all very glad."

"After de war, we worked but we got pay for it."

"Ole man Pierce and others would call some kin' of a political(political) meetin' but I could never understand what dey was talkin' 'bout. We didn't had no kin' of schools and all I knowed but dis is dat I went to school in Low and Charles Counties."

"I had lots of sisters and brothers but I can't 'member de names of none by Lytle, Mary, Patsy and Ella; my brothers, is Edward and Cornelius Jackson. (Cornelius is livin' now somewhere I think but I don't never see him.)"

"Then de big gun fished I was a young slave tatin' cotton to de fields at de plantation; at de ginhouse was close by, we had to take de cotton to it, but at it was fust 'way 'round de house



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Rudolf A. Austin
Jacksonville, Florida

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to do fields and watch it up and take it to do pinhouse. I was
still livin' near Lake Jackson and we went to Aaron Bailey's
place near Tallahassee. Carr turned us out without nuttin and
Bailey sild us his ham oo' and we went here for a home. First we
cut down saplin's for we didn' had no money, and took de tops of
pines and put on de top; den we put dirt on top of de saplin's
and sleep' under dem. When de rain would come, it would wash all de
dirt right down in our faces and we'd have to wash our faces all
over ag'in. We didn' had no money to build a house for us, so we
put up some poles and we built up the house and we lived in de house
for a while. We would build de house for us. We live on Bailey's place a long
time and fin'ly build' us a log cabin and den we went from de cabin
to Gadsden County to a place near Concord and here I stay till I come
here 'fore de fish."

"I had twelve chillun but right now missus, I can only
remember de names: Robert, 'Lijah, Edward, Correllus, Lillie, Daniel
and Sophie."

"I was converted in Leon County and after freedom I
joined de Beth'el church and my membership is now in Mount Zion
A.M.E. Church in Jacksonville, Florida."

"My first master was Wilson Miller and de name de man was
name Dave Richardson. I don' think I was 21 years old when de man
died, but I was more' 17- I reckon I was a little older den Florio
May (a missus who is 17 years of age) is now." (1)



Slave Interview
Pastor A. Austin
Jacksonville, Florida

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PCC

Mrs. Wickham, according to her information must be about 70 or 80 years of age, even without glasses having never used them; she does not read or write but speaks in a surprising manner. She has most of her teeth and a splendid appetite. She spends her time sitting in a wheel-chair sewing or quilting. She has several quilts that she has made, some from very small scraps which she has cut without the use of any particular pattern.

She has a full head of beautiful gray white hair and has the use of her limbs, except her legs, and is able to do most things for herself. (2)

She lives with her daughter at 1000 Myrtle Avenue, Jacksonville, Florida.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Michael A. Austin
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 8, 1936

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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Viola S. Hise
Field Worker
Complete

1,143 Words
5 Pages

Slave Interview
December 18, 1938

Irene Centes

Immediately after slavery in the United States, the southern white people found themselves without servants. Women who were accustomed to having a nurse, maid, cook and laundress found themselves without sufficient money to pay wages to all these. There was a great amount of work to be done and the great problem confronting married women who had not been taught to work and who thought it beneath their standing to sell their hands, found it very difficult.

There were on the other hand many Negro women who needed work and young girls who needed guidance and training.

The home and children of the aristocratic white people offered the best opportunity for the ignorant un-schooled freed woman; and it was in this kind of home that the ex-slave child of this story was reared.

Irene Centes of 2115 Tinkle Street, Jacksonville, Florida, was born in Georgia about 1885. She was eleven to sixteen years of age when freedom was declared.

She was one among the many Negro children who had the advantage of living under the direct supervision of kind whites



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and receiving the care which could only be excelled by an educated mother.

Jimie and Lou Ballall were the names of the son and wife who saw the need of having a Negro girl come into their home as one in the family and at the same time be assured of a good and efficient servant in years to come.

When Irene was old enough, she became the nurse of the Ballall baby and when the family left Savannah, Georgia to come to Jacksonville, they brought Irene with them.

Although Irene was just about six years old when the Civil War ended, she has vivid recollection of happenings during slavery. Some of the incidents which happened were told her by her slave associates after slavery ended and some of them she remembers herself.

The incidents which she considers caused respect for slaves by their masters and finally the Emancipation by Abraham Lincoln she tells in this order.

The first event tells of a young, strong healthy Negro woman who knew her work and did it well. "She would pick up two bags of guano (fertilizer) and tote 'em at one time," said Irene, and was never found shirking her work. The overseer on the plantation, was very hard on the slaves and practiced striking them across the back with a whip when he wanted to spur them on to do more work.

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Irene says, one day a crowd of women were hoeing in the field and the overseer rode along and struck one of the women across the back with the whip, and the one nearest her spoke and said that if he ever struck her like that, it would be the day he or she would die. The overseer heard the remark and the first opportunity he got, he rode by the woman and struck her with the whip and started to ride on. The woman was hoarse at the time, she whipped around, struck the overseer on his head with the hoe, knocking him from his horse, she then jumped upon him and choked his head off. She went for a few moments and returned to chop and mutilate his body; that done to her satisfaction, she then killed his horse. She then came to tell the master of the matter, saying "I've done killed the overseer." The master replied "Do you mean to say you've killed the overseer?" she answered yes, and that she had killed the horse also. Without hesitating, the master pointing to one of his small cabins on the plantation said "You see that house over there?" she answered yes - at the same time looking - "Well said he, take all your belongings and move into that house and you are free from this day and if the mistress wants you to do anything for her, do it if you want to." Irene related with much emotion the effect that incident had upon the future treatment of the slaves.

The other incident occurred in Virginia. It was upon an occasion when Mrs. Abraham Lincoln was visiting in Richmond. A woman slaveowner had one of her slaves whipped in the presence of Mrs. Lin-

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Violet B. Jones
Jacksonville, Florida

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coin. It was easily noticed that the woman was an expectant mother. Mrs. Lincoln was horrified at the situation and expressed herself as being so, saying that she was going to tell the President as soon as she returned to the White House. Whether this incident had any bearing upon Mr. Lincoln's actions or not, these slaves who were present and Irene says that they all believed it to be the beginning of the President's activities to end slavery.

Besides these incidents, Irene remembers that women who were not strong and robust were given such work as sewing, weaving and mending babies. The cloth from which the Sunday clothes of the slaves was made was called muscadine and the slave women were very proud of this. The older women were required to do most of the weaving of cloth and making shirts for the male slaves.

The old woman who had been sick, regained her strength, she was sent to the fields the same as the younger ones. The ones who could cook and tickle the palates of her mistress and master were highly prized and were seldom if ever offered for sale at the auction block.

The slaves were given fat meat and bread made of husk of corn and wheat. This caused them to steal food and when caught they were severely whipped.

Irene recalls the practice of blowing a horn whenever a sudden rain came. The overseer had a certain Negro to blow three times and if shelter could be found, the slaves were expected to seek it until the rain ceased.

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Viola D. Budd
Jacksonville, Florida

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The master had shade built at intervals on the plantation. These accommodated a goodly number; if no shade was available the slaves stood under trees. If neither was handy and the slaves got wet, they could not go to the cabins to change clothes for fear of losing time from work. This was often the case; she says that slaves were more neglected than the cattle.

Another custom which impressed the child-mind of Irene was the flogging of slaves by their masters to a bare back and whipping them. Men and young girls were treated the same as were men.

After the Rebels took Irene to live in their home they traveled a deal. After bringing her to Jacksonville, when Jacksonville was only a small port, they then went to Camden County, Georgia.

Irene married while in Georgia and came back to Jacksonville with her husband Charles, the year of the earthquake at Charleston, South Carolina, about 1883.

Irene and Charles Cooke have lived in Jacksonville since that time. She relates many things of happenings during the time that this city grew from a town of about four houses to its present status.

Irene is the mother of five children. She has nine grand-children and eight great-grandchildren. Her health is fair, but her eyesight is poor. It is her delight to entertain visitors and is conversant upon matters pertaining to slavery and Reconstruction days.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Civil Liberties Unit
Jacksonville, Florida

Viola E. Page
Field Worker
Cook 2420

Slave Interview
Dec 24 1930

REFERENCE

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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Pearl Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

2,030 Words

7 Pages

Slave Interview
December 5, 1936

Edward Lycuras

"Pap tell us 'nuther story' 'bout de war - and 'bout de fast time you saw warra."

It has been almost 60 years since a group of children gathered about their father's knee, clamoring for another story. They listened round eyed to stories they already knew because "pap" had told them so many times before. These narratives along with the great changes he had seen, were carefully recorded in the mind of Edward, the only one of this group now alive.

"Pap" was always ready to oblige with the story they never tired of. He could always be depended upon to begin at the beginning, for he loved to tell it.

"It all begun with our ship being took off the coast of New Port News, Virginia. We was runnin' the blockade- sellin' guns and what-not to them Northerners. We aint had nothin' to do wid de war, unnerstand. de English folks was after de money. What War? The North and South's, of course. I hear my captain say som a time as how they was playin' ball wid the poor niggers. One of says 'You cant keep your niggers unless you pay em and treat em li

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Pearl Randolph
Jacksonville, Florida

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other folks.' Mind you dat wasnt de rale reason, they was mad at de South but it was one of de ways dey could be hurted- to free de niggers."

"De South says "Dees is our niggers and we'll do dur as we please, and so de rumpus got wuss dan it was afore. The North had all de money, and called itself de Gov'ment. The South aint had nothin', but a termination not to be put-did, so we dealt wid de North. De South was called de Rebels."

"So when dey see a ship off they coast, they hailed it and when we kep goin', they fired at us. 'Twen't long afore we was bring unloaded and marched off to the loucest jail I ever been in. My captain kep tellin' us we was English subjects and could not be held. Me, I was a seafirt man, cause I was always free, and ever here dey took it for granted dat all black men should be slaves."

"The jailer felt of my muscles one day, when he had marched us out at the point of his musket to fill de watering troughs for de horses. He wanted to know who I blow ter, and offered to buy me. When nobody claimed me, they was forced to let me go long wid de other Britishers and as our ship had been destroyed, we had to git back home best we could. Dey didn't dare hold us no longer."

"As de war was still being fit, we was forced to separate, cause a lot of us would cause spicion, traipsing 'bout de counsry. Me- I took off southward and way from de war belt, traveling as far as Saint Augustine. It was a dangerous journey, as anybody was liable to pick me off for a runaway slave. I was forced to hide in de day time

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if I was near a settlement and travel at night. I met many run-away slaves. Some was trying to get North and fight for de freeing of they people; others was jes run-in' wry cause dey could. Many of dem didn't had no idea where dey was goin' and told of havin' good masters. But one and all dey had a good strong notion ter see what it was like to own your own body."

"I felt worlds better when I reached Saint Augustine. Many ships landed there and I knowed I could get my way back at least to de West Indies, where I come from. I showed my papers to everybody dat mounted ter anything and dey knowed I was a free nigger. I had plenty of money on me and I made a big ter de some de other free men I met. One day I went to the slave market and watc ed on barter off po niggers like dey was hogs. Their families sold together and some was split- mother gone to one master and father and children gone to others."

"They'd bring a slave out on the platform and open his mouth, pound his chest, make him harden his muscles so the buyer could see what he was gittin'. Young men was called 'bucks' and young women 'wenches'. The person that offered the best price was de buyer. And dey where did git rid of some pretty gals. Dey always looked so shame and pitiful up on dat stand wid all de men standin' dere lookin' at em wid what dey had on dey minds shinin' in they eyes. One little gal walked up and left her mammy mournin' so pitiful cause she had to be sold. Seems like dey all belong in a family where nobody ever was sold. My she was a pretty gal."



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"And dat's why your nanna's named Julia stead of Mary Jane or Hannah or somethin' else- She cost me \$950.00 and den my own freedom. But she was worth it-every bit of it!"

"After that I put off my trip back home and made her home my home for three years. Den with our two young children we left Floridy and went to the West Indies to live. We traveled bout a bit gettin as far as England. We got letters from your ma's folks and dey jes had to see her or else somebody would'er died, so we sailed back into de war."

"Freedom was declared soon after we got back to de union and de whole country was turned upside down. De pe riggers went mad. Some refused to work and dey didn't stay in one place long 'nough to do a thing. De crops suffered and soon we had starvation times for 'bout two years. After dat everybody learnt to think of a rainy day and things got better."

Edward recalls of hearing his father tell of eating wild hog salad and cabbage pains. It was a common occurrence to see whole families subsisting on any wild plant known to be poisonous if it contained the least food value. The freedmen helped those who were newly liberated to gain a footing. Prior to Emancipation they had not been allowed to associate with slaves for fear they might engender in them the desire to be free. The freedmen bore the brunt of the white man's suspicion whenever there was a slave uprising. They were always accusing them of being instigators. Edward often heard



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his mother tell of the "patter-rollers", a group of white men who caught and administered severe whippings to these unfortunate slaves. They also corraled slaves back to their masters if they were caught out after nine o'clock at night without a pass from their masters.

George Lycouras was born at Liverpool, England and became a seaman at an early age. Edward thinks he might have had a fair education if he had had the chance. The mother, Julia Gray, Lycouras, was the daughter of Barbara and David Gray, slaves of the Flemings of Clay County, Florida.

These slaves were inherited from generation to generation and no one ever thought to sell one except for punishment or in dire necessity. They were treated kindly and like most slaves of the wealthy, had no knowledge of the real cruelties of slavery, but upon the death of their owner it became necessary to parcel the slaves out to different heirs, some of whom did not believe in holding these unfortunates. These would be abolitionists, were not averse to placing at auction their share of the slaves, however.

It was on this occasion that George Lycouras saw and bought the girl who was to become his wife. Both are now dead, also all of the several children except Edward who tells their story here.

Edward Lycouras was born on October 28, 1872, at Saint Augustine, Florida shortly after the return of the family from the West Indies. He lived on his father's farm sharing at an early age the hard work that seemed always in abundance, and listening in aw

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to the stories of the recent war. He heard his elders give thanks for their freedom when they attended church and wondered what it was all about.

No one failed to attend church on Sundays and all work ceased in a vicinity where a camp meeting was held. Farmers flocked to the meeting from all parts of Saint Johns County. They brought food in their large baskets. Some owned buggies but most of them hauled their families in wagons or walked. The camp meetings would sometimes last for several days according to the spiritual fervor exhibited by those attending.

Lycourge recalls the stirring sermons and spirituals that rang through the woods and could be heard for several miles on a clear day. And the river baptisms! These climaxed the meetings and were attended by large crowds of whites in the neighborhood. All candidates were dressed in white gowns, stockings and towels wound about their heads bandana fashion. Two by two they marched to the river from the spot where they had dressed. There was always some stirring song to accompany their slow march to the river. "Take me to the water to be baptized" was the favorite spiritual for this occasion.

As in all things, some attended camp meetings for the opportunity it afforded them to indulge in illicit love making. Others went to show their finery and there was plenty of it according to Lycourge's statement. There seemed to be beautiful clothing, fine teams and buggies everywhere- a sort of reaction from the restraint

upon them in slavery. Many wore clothing they could not afford.

There seemed to be a deeper interest in politics during these times. Mass meetings, engineered by "carpet baggers" were often held and largely attended, although the father of Edward did not hold with these activities very much. He often heard the preacher point out Negroes who attended the meetings and attained prominence in politics as an example for members of his flock to follow. He believes he recalls hearing the name of Joseph Gibbs.

Next to the preacher, the Negro school teacher was held in greatest respect. Until the year of the "shake" (earthquake of 1886) there were no Negro school teachers on Saint Johns County and no school buildings. They attended classes at the fort and were taught by a white woman who had come from "the north" for this purpose. Edward was able to learn very little from his blue back teacher because his help was needed on the farm.

He was a lover of home, very shy and did not care much for courting. He remained with his parents until their deaths and did not leave the vicinity for many years. He is still unmarried and resides at the Clara White Mission, Jacksonville, Florida, where he receives a small salary for the plodding jobs about the place that he is able to do.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Pearl Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 5, 1936

REFERENCE

- I. Parsons interview with Edward Lycargus, 611 West Ashley Street,
Jacksonville, Florida

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel A. Austin
Field Worker
Complete
867 Words
4 Pages

Slave Interview
November 30, 1936

A Contention

Luke Towne, a contention, was residing at 1235 West Eighth Street, Jacksonville, Florida, was the ninth child born to Maria and Luke Towne, slaves, December 14, 1835, in a village in Talbot County, Georgia.

Mr. Towne's parents were owned by Severus Towne, whose name was taken by all the children born on the plantation; he stated that he was placed on the public block for sale, and was purchased by a Mr. Harmon. At the marriage of Mr. Harmon's daughter, Sarah, according to custom, he was given to this daughter as a wedding present, and thus became the slave and took the name of the Gilleys and lived with them until he became a young man at Dalhousie, Georgia, in Lee County.

His chief work was that of carrying water, wood and working around the house when a youngster; often, he stated he would hide in the woods to keep from working.

Because his mother was a child-bearing woman, she did not know the hard labor of slavery, but had a small patch of cotton and a garden near the house to care for. "All of the others worked hard", said he "but my kind mother was fed them well."

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When asked if his mother were a christian, he replied "My yes: indeed she was, and believed in prayer; one day as she traveled from her patch home, just as she was about to let the 'trap' (this was a fence built to keep the hogs and horses shut in) down, she knelt to pray and a light appeared before her and from that time on she did not believe in any fegries, but in God."

"I cannot remember much now," he says, "of what happened in slavery, but after slavery we went back to the name of Towne. I know I got some whippings and during the war my job was that of carrying the master's luggage." (1)

After the war he went to Albany, Georgia and began working for himself, hauling salt from Albany to Tallahassee, Florida; this salt was sold to the stores. His next job was that of sampling cotton.

Just before he was 33 years old he was married to Mary Julia Oates, who lived near Albany, Georgia. To them were born the following children: Willie, George, Alexander, Henry Williamson, Ella Louise, and twins- Walter Luke and Mary Julia, who were named for the parents.

He was converted to the Baptist faith when his first child was born; there were no churches, but services were held in the blacksmith shop on the corner of Jackson and Third Streets. Later he became a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church

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Albany, Georgia, and served there for 35 years as a deacon.

He remained in Georgia until 1896 when he moved to Tampa, Florida and there he operated a safe. He joined British Baptist Church and served as deacon there until he sold his business and came to Jacksonville, 1917, to live with his youngest daughter, Mrs. Mary Houston, because he was too old to operate a business. In Jacksonville he connected himself with the Bethel Baptist Church, and while too old to serve as an active deacon, he was placed on the honorary list because of his previous record of church service.

As a relic of pre-freedom days, Mr. Towns has a piece of paper money and a one-cent piece which he keeps carefully locked in his trunk and allows no one to open the trunk; he keeps the key.

Mr Towns, who will celebrate his one-hundred-first birthday, December 24, 1916, is not able to coherently relate incidents of the past; he hears but little and that with great difficulty.

He says he has his second eyesight; he reads without the use of glasses; until very recently he has been very active in mind and body, having registered in the spring of 1916, signing his own name on the registration books. He has almost all of his hair, which is thick, silvery white and of artist length. He has most of his teeth, walks without a cane except when painful; dresses himself without assistance.

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Rachel Austin
Jacksonville, Florida

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Mr. Towns rises at six o'clock each morning, often earlier. Makes his bed (he has never allowed anyone to make his bed for him) and because it is still dark has to lie across the bed to await the breaking of day. His health is very good and his appetite strong.

Upon the occasion of his one-hundredth birthday, December 24, 1835, his daughter Mrs. Houston gave him a child's party and invited one hundred guests; one hundred cakes were made, filled with fruits, nuts and candies and one given each guest. A large cake with one hundred candles adorned the table and during the party he cut the cake. At this party, he showed all the joys and pleasures of a child. His other daughter Mrs. F.L. McMillan, of New York City, and son Mr. George Towns, for years an instructor in Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, were present for the occasion.

Mr. Towns has been noted during his lifetime for having a remarkable memory and has many times publicly delivered orations from many of Shakespeare's works. His memory began failing him in 1836.

He is very well educated and for several years of his time sitting on the porch reading the Bible. (1)

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel A. Austin
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
November 30, 1936

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Jacksonville, Florida

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Pearl Pennington
Field Worker
Complete

1,650 Words
7 Pages

Slave Interview
November 25, 1936

Aula Thomas

Mr. Thomas was at home today. There was every
sign when one might pass and expect the sturdy man-to that
is his home without seeing any signs of life. That is because
he spends much of his time farming about the streets of
Jacksonville for whatever he can get in the way of food or old
clothes, and perhaps a little money.

He is a heavily bearded, bent old man and a familiar
figure in the residential sections of the city, where he earns
or begs a very meager livelihood. Many know his story and marvel
at his ability to relate incidents that must have occurred when he
was quite small.

Born in Jefferson County, Florida on July 20, 1837,
he was one of the 140 slaves belonging to the Polson brothers,
Tom and Bryant. His parents, Thomas and Mary, and their parents
as far as they could remember, were all a part of the Polson oc-
cupancy. The Polsons never sold a slave except as merited this dire
punishment in some way.

Aula heard vague rumors of the condition of some
slave owners, but it was unknown among the Polsons. He claims this
was due to the fact that certain "po white trash" in the vicinity

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of their plantation owned slaves. It was the habit of the Folsons to buy out these people whenever they could do so by fair means or foul, according to his statement. And by and by there were no poor whites living near them. It was, he further stated like "damning a nigger's soul, if Massa Tom or Massa Bryant threatened to sell him to some poor white trash. And it always bring good results- better than taking the hide off'n his white skin done."

As a child John spent much of his time roaming over the broad acres of the Folson plantation with other slave children. They waded in the streams, fished, chased rabbits and always knew where the choicest wild berries and nuts were. He knew all the wood lore common to children of his time. This he learned mostly from "Uncle Ed" who was several years older than he and quite willing to enlighten a small boy in these matters.

He was taught that hooting owls were very jealous of their night hours and whenever they hooted near a field of workers they were saying: "That done or no done- night's my time- go home!" Whippoorwill flitted about the woods in cotton picking time chattering about Jack marrying a widow. He could not remember the story that went with this. Opossums were a "sham faced" tribe who "sometimes wandered onto the wrong side of the day and got caught." They never overcame this shame as long as they were in captivity.

All bull rushes and tree stumps were to be carefully

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searched. One might find his baby brother there at any time.

When Asie "got up some size" he was required to do small tasks, but the mistre was not very exacting. There were the important tasks of foraging out the nests of stray hens, turkeys, guineas and geese. These nests were robbed to prevent the fowls from hatching too far from the hen house. Quite a number of these eggs got roasted in remote corners of the plantation by the finders, who built fires and wrapped the eggs in wet rags and covered them with ashes. When they were done a loud pop announced that food to the roaster. Potatoes were cooked in the same manner and often without the rags. Consequently these two tasks were never neglected by the slave children. Cotton picking was not a bad job either- at least to the young.

Then there was the ride to the cotton house at the end of the day atop the baskets and boxes lashed sheets filled with the day's pickings. Asie's fondest ambition was to learn to manipulate the scales that told him who had done a good day's work and who had not. His cousin Ed did this unpaid task whenever the overseer could not find the time.

Many other things were grown here. Corn for the cattle and "roasting ears," peanuts, tobacco and sugar cane. The cane was ground on the plantation and converted into barrels of syrup and brown sugar. The cane grinding season was always a gala one. There was always plenty of juice, with the shavings and fresh syrup for all. Other industries were the blacksmith shop where



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Parr Randolph
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horses and slaves were shed. The smoke houses where scores of hogs and cows were prepared and hung for future use. The sewing was provided over by the mistress. Clothing was made during the summer and stored away for the cool winters. Young slave girls were kept busy at knitting cotton and woolen stockings. Cookies were made in the "big house" kitchen and only for consumption by the household of the master. Slaves used fat lightwood knots or their open fireplaces for lighting purposes.

There was always plenty of everything to eat for the slaves. They had white bread that had been made on the place. Corn meal, rice, potatoes, string vegetables and home cured meat. Food was cooked in large pots hung over the fireplace by large rods of the same metal. Bread and pastries were made in the "kitchen" and "kitchen."

High work was needed to supply the demands of so large a plantation but the slaves were often given time off for frolics (dances), (pillaging-weddings). These gatherings were attended by all and young from neighboring plantations. There was always plenty of food, masters vying with another for the honor of giving his slaves the finest parties.

There was dancing and music. On the Polk plantation Bryant, the youngest of the masters furnished the music. He played the fiddle and liked to see the slaves dance "cutting the pigeon wing."

Many matches were made at these affairs. The women

slave Interview
Paul Bartolotta
Jacksonville, Florida

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were "all rigged out in their best" which was not bad at all, as the mistress often gave them their coat off clothes. Some of these were very fine indeed with their frills and hoops and very petticoats. Those who had no finery contented themselves with admiring their hair and bodies with sweet herbs, which they also smelled. Quite often they were rewarded by the attention of some white man from a distant plantation. In this case it was necessary for their respective owners to consent to a union. Slaves on the Folsom plantation were always married properly and quite often had a "celebration" wedding, the master and mistress often came and made merry with their slaves.

Acie knew about the war because he was one of the slaves commandeered by the Confederates early for hauling feed and ammunition to different points between Tallahassee and a city in Virginia that he is unable to remember. It was a common occurrence for the soldiers to visit the plantation owners and command a certain number of horses and slaves for service such as Acie did.

He thinks that he might have been about 15 years old when he was freed. A soldier in blue came to the plantation and brought a "document" that Tom, their master read to all the slaves who had been summoned to the "big house" for that purpose. About half of them consented to remain with him. The others went away, glad of their new freedom. Few had made any plans and were content to wander about the country, living as they could. Some were white water skinner, and Acie's father was among the latter. He remained on the Folsom place for a short while; he then settled down to share-cropper-

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ing in Jefferson County. Their first year was the hardest, because of the many adjustments that had to be made. Their things seemed better. By means of hard work and the co-operation of friendly whites the slaves in the section soon learned to shift for themselves.

Northerners and South "in service" had opened schools for the ex-slaves, but Asie was not fortunate enough to get very far in his "blue back school." There was too much work to be done and his father trying to buy the land. Nor Asie had any interest in the political matters held in the neighborhood. His parents shared with him the common belief that such things were not to be shared by the humble. Some believed that "too much book learning made the brain weak."

Asie met and married Keviah Wright, who was the daughter of a woman his mother had known in slavery. Strongly enough they had never met as children. With his wife he remained in Jefferson County, where nine of their thirteen children were born.

With his family he moved to Jacksonville and had been living here "a right good while" when the fire occurred in 1891. He was employed as a city laborer and helped to build street car lines and pave streets. He also helped with the installation of electric wiring in many parts of the city. He was injured while working for the City of Jacksonville, but claims that he was never in any

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never remunerated for this injury.

Asia worked hard and accumulated land in the Homestead section and lives within a few feet of the spot where his house burned away years ago. He was very old as he pointed out this spot to his visitor. A few recently broken and old stumps were a charred bit of fence, a chimney foundation and the only remains of the home he built after years of a hard struggle to have a home. His land is all gone except the about five acres upon which he lives, and this is only an extension of former land. He is no longer able to cultivate the land, not even having a kitchen garden.

Kosiah, the wife, died several years ago; likewise all the children, except two. One of these, a girl is "scattered up North". The son has visited him twice in five years and does not seem to have anything to give the old man who expresses himself as desiring much to "quit his unfriendly world" since he has nothing to live for except a lot of dead memories. To make him:

"All done left me now. Everything I got done gone all but Kosiah. She comes and visits me and we talk and sit over there where we used to sit on the porch. She say she going stay old Asia some of these days in the near future, and I'll be mighty glad to go over yonder where all I got is at."



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Pauli Frazier
Field Writer
Complete

Slave Interview
November 27, 1939

INTERVIEW

- I. Personal interview with Asa Thomas, Member of Team
Jacksonville, Florida

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Nathaniel A. Austin
Field Worker
Complete

2,616 Words
11 Pages

Slave Interview
October 27, 1936
John A. Simms
Editor

Samuel Simonon Andrews

For almost 50 years Edward Waters College, an African Methodist Episcopal School, located on the north side of Kings Road in the western section of Jacksonville, has employed as watchman, Samuel Simonon Andrews (affectionately called "Parson"), a former slave of A.J. Lane of Georgia, Lewis Ripley of Beaufort, South Carolina, Ed Williamson of Dallas, Texas, and John Tray of Union Springs, Alabama.

"Parson" was born November 12, 1850 in Tacon, Georgia, at a place called Tatum Square, where slaves were held, housed and sold. "Speculators" (persons who traveled from place to place with slaves for sale) had housed 24 slaves there- many of whom were pregnant women. Besides "Parson", two other slave-children, Ed Jones who now lives in Sparta, Georgia, and George Bailey were born in Tatum Square that night. The morning after their births, a woman was sent from the nearby A.J. Lane plantation to take care of the three mothers; this



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mares proved to be "Parson's" grandmother. His mother told him afterwards that the meeting of mother and daughter was very jubilant, but silent and pathetic, because neither could with safety show her pleasure in finding the other. At the auction which was held a few days later, his mother, Rachel, and her two sons, Solomon Augustus and her infant son who was later to be known as "Parson," were purchased by A.J. Lane who had previously bought "Parson's" father, Willie, from a man named Delphus of Albany, Georgia; thus were husband and wife re-united. They were taken to Lane's plantation three miles out of Sparta, Georgia, in Hancock County. Mr. Lane owned 50 slaves and was known to be very kind and considerate.

"Parson" lived on the Lane plantation until he was eight years old, when he was sold to Lewis Wiley of Beaufort, South Carolina, with whom he lived for two years; he was then sold to Ed Tillman of Dallas, Texas; he stayed on the Tillman plantation for about a year and until he was purchased by John Troy of Union Springs, Alabama- the richest slave-holder in Union Springs, Alabama; he remained with him until emancipation. He recalls that during one of these sales about \$300.00 was paid for him.

He describes A.J. Lane as being a kind slave-holder who fed his slaves well and whipped them but little. All of his

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other masters, he states, were nice to children, but lashed and whipped the grown-ups.

Mr. Lane's family was comprised of his wife, Fannie (who also was very kind to the slaves) five children, Harriett Ann, Jennie, Jeff, Frankie and Mac Jemie, a brother (whose name he does not recall) who owned a few slaves but was kind to those that he did own. Although very young during slavery, "Parson" remembers many plantation activities and customs, among which are the following: That the master's children and those of the slaves on the plantation played together; the farm crops consisted of corn, cotton, peas, wheat and oats; and that the feed for the slaves was cooked in pots which were hung over a fire; that the iron oven used by the slaves had holes for baking; how during the Civil War, wheat, corn and dried potatoes were parched and used as substitutes for coffee; that his mother was given a peck of flour every two weeks; that a mixture of salt and mud was put from the earthen floor of the smokehouse and water poured over it to get the smoke for seasoning; that root medicine consisted of boiled roots; when thread and cloth were dyed with the dye obtained from maple bark; when shoes were made of a wooden last and soles and uppers fastened together with warp rope; when the white preachers preached "obey your masters"; that the first buggy that he saw was owned by his master, A.J. Lane; it had a seat at the rear with rest which was usually occupied by a



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man who was called the "miter"; there was no top to the mit
and the "miter" was exposed to the weather. He recalls when work
on site and tightened some were used for bed springs; also the
patience of "Aunt Letha" and old women who took care of the
children in the neighborhood while their parents worked, and
how they enjoyed watching "Uncle Ephraim" and his wife.

"Parson" remembers himself as being very feisty as
a boy and strong but he did not very little work and not that
very far whittling. Twice he ran away to escape being whipped and
hid in a swampy hole in Okefenokee, Georgia until daylight; when he
returned the master would not whip him because he was apprehensive
that he might run away again and be stolen by poorer whites and
thus cause trouble. The richer whites, he recalls, were afraid of
the poorer whites; if the latter were caught and whipped round
up the owners' sheep and then turn loose into their fields
and the sheep would eat the cotton, row by row.

He compares the relations between the rich and
poor whites during slavery with that of the white and Negro people
of today.

With a face full of frowns, "Parson" tells of a
white man persuading his mother to let him go to school and
work master, promising not to whip her, and she believed him. When
he had passed her in a sack (made tight as a tick so that she
could not see him) he (not with her in front) in which she
knew she was not back.



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With a sad expression he told of an incident during the Civil War: Slaves, he explained, had to have passes to go from one plantation to another and if one were found without a pass the "patrollers" would pick him up, return him to his master and receive pay for their service. The "patrollers" were guards for running slaves. One night they came to Aunt Fitch's house where a crowd of slaves had gathered and were going to return them to their masters; Uncle Anthony the farmer, however, shot them down; he shot it on them; all of the slaves seemed unhurt, while all of the "patrollers" were badly injured; no one ever told me Uncle Anthony and Aunt Fitch was mentioned by her mother she stated that she knew nothing about it but told them that the "patrollers" had beaten another "nigger" with them; her mother said it for granted that she spoke the truth since none of the other Negroes were hurt. He remembers seeing this but does not remember how he, as a little boy, was prevented from talking about it.

Asked about his remembrance or knowledge of the slaves' belief in magic and spells he said: "I remember this and one just as the same thing around now. My mother's best friend, 'Uncle Dick' and 'Uncle July' swore they would not work longer for masters; so they ran away and lived in the woods. In winter they would put cotton seed in the fields to rot for fertilizer and lay in it for warmth. They would kill hogs and split the meat to save



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slaves to cook for food. When their owners looked for them, "Bob Anna" who raised "nigger hounds" (usually raised solely to track Negro slaves) was summoned and the dogs located them and surrounded them in their hide-out; one went one way and one the other and escaped in the woods; they would run until they came to a fence - and kept some "graveyard dirt" and a few iron nails and splinters with which they scratched their feet and jumped the fence and the dogs turned back and would track no further. Then, they stayed in the woods until freedom, when they came out and worked for pay. Now, you know "Uncle Dick" just died a few years ago in Sparta, Georgia."

When the Civil War came he remembers hearing one night "Sherman is coming." It was said that Wheeler's Cavalry of the Confederates was always "running and fighting." Lane had moved the family to Moon, Georgia, and they lived on a place called "Dunlap's Hill." That night four ^{men} were preaching "Fellow soldiers, the enemy is just here at Golden's Brook, sixteen miles away and you may be carried into captivity; prepare to meet your God." While they were preaching, bombs began to fly because Wheeler's Cavalry was only six miles away instead of 16 miles; women, men and children ran. Wheeler kept saying ahead of him so that when one was crippled the other would replace it. He says he imagines he hears the voice of Sherman now, saying: "Tell Wheeler to go on to South Carolina; we will run it down with grubs and blow it



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is with baseball.

Emancipation came and with it great rejoicing. He recalls that Republicans were called "Radicals" just after the close of the Civil War.

Mr. Lann was able to save all of his money, silver, and other valuables during the war by having a cow, dog in the hog pasture; the hogs trampled over it daily.

"Parson" states that among the papers in his trunk he has a piece of money called "shin plasters" which was used during the Civil War.

The slaves were not allowed to attend schools of any kind; and school facilities immediately following Emancipation were very poor; when the first teacher, Miss Smith, a Yankee, came to South Georgia and began teaching Sunday School. All of the children were given testaments or bibles which their parents were afraid for them to keep lest their masters whip them, but the teacher called on the parents and explained to them that they were as free as their former masters.

"Parson" states that when he was born, his mother named him "Tom." His grandfather, Willie Anderson, who was a free man of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, purchased the freedom of his wife Lizzie, but was never able to purchase their four children; his father, also named Willie, died a slave, was driven in an ox-cart to a hole that had been dug, put in it and covered up;



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His mother nor children could stop work to attend the funeral, but after the Emancipation, he and a brother returned, found "Uncle Bob" who helped bury him and located his grave. Soon after he had been given his freedom, "Parson" walked from Union Springs, Alabama where his last master had taken him - back to Union, Georgia, and rejoined his mother, Rachel, his brothers, Daniel Augustus, John Frederick, Simon Peter, Levin, Carter, Powell Wendell and sisters, Lizzie and Ann; they all dropped the name of their master, Lane, and took the name of their grandfather, Andrews.

"Parson" possesses an almost uncanny memory and attributes it to his inability to write things down and therefore being entirely dependant upon his memory. He has passed 85 years of age and has two children who could read and write before he could. His connection with Howard College has given him a decided advantage for education and there are few things that he cannot discuss intelligently. He has come in contact with thousands of students and all of the ministers connected with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the State of Florida and has attended all of the State and General Conferences of this Church for the past half century. He has lived to be 85 years of age and says he will live until he is 100. This he will do because he claims: "Your life is in your hand" and tells these narratives as proof:



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"In 1833 when the present Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was called the S.F.W. and I was coming from Savannah to Florida, some troops intent upon robbery had removed spikes from the bridge and just as the alarm was given and the train about to be thrown from the track, I seized the ladder and jumped to safety. I then walked back the piers to report it. ~~There~~ were killed but might have been saved had they jumped as I did. As a result, the S.F. and W. gave me a free pass for life with which I rode all over the United States and over into Canada. He promptly displays this pass and states that he would like to travel over the United States again but that the school keeps him too close.

"I had been very sick but took no medicine; my wife went out to visit Sister Nancy- shortly afterwards I heard what sounded like walking, and in my imagination saw death entering, push the door open and draw back to look at me; I jumped through the window, my shirt hung, but I pulled it out. Mr. Hodges, a Baptist preacher was hoisting in the garden next door, looked at me and laughed. A woman yelled 'there goes Reverend Andrews, and death is on him.' I said 'no he isn't on me but he's down there.' Pretty soon news came that Reverend Hodges had dropped dead. Death had come for someone and would not leave without them. I was weak and he tried as first. Reverend Hodges wasn't looking, so he slipped up on him."

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"Parson" came to Umatilla, Florida, in 1868 from Georgia with a Mr. Rogers who brought him and his wife, their five children, to work on the plantation; he was made the "white" man which job he held until a white man threatened to "beat" him because he was wearing a white shirt and "sitting over a white man" when he should have a shovel. This was the opinion of a man in the vicinity, and another white friend, ^{Mr. J. J. J.} "Javier" warned him and advised him not to leave Umatilla, but persuaded him to work for the cutting cord wood; although "Parson" had never seen wood corded, he accepted the job and was given a piece of land in Georgia, to get other men; he bought 11 men and some horses and a "cow" and bought a house and decided to be a little better. When he left this job he did some other work, and worked as a field porter. In 1868 he was ordered to preach and has preached and ministered regularly from that time up to two years ago.

He is of medium size and build and partially bald-headed; what little hair he has is very gray; he has blue eyes; his eyesight is very good; he has never had to wear glasses. He is as simple as one half his age; it is usually demonstrated as he runs, jumps and yells while attending the games of his favorite pastimes, baseball and football. Whenever the Board

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Waters College football team goes, there "Parson" wants to go also. Whenever the crowd at a game hears the word "Come on boys," everyone knows it is "Parson" Anderson.

"Parson" has had two wives, both of whom are dead, and is the father of eight children: Willie (deceased) Johnny, Union House of Martin, Tennessee, Annie Lee, of Macon, Georgia, Mattie of Jacksonville, Ella (deceased) Mary Lou Rivers of Macon, Georgia, and Augustus somewhere-at-sea.

"Parson" does not believe in taking medicine, but makes a liniment with which he rubs himself. He attributes his long life to his habit of "having quitting games" and not allowing death to catch him unawares. He asserts that if he reaches the bedside of a kindred in time, he will keep him from dying by telling him: "Come on now, don't be afraid and die."

He states that he enjoyed his slavery life and since that time life has been very sweet. He knows and remembers most of the incidents connected with members of the several Conferences of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida and can tell you in what minutes you may find any of the important happenings of the ¹⁸30 or 40 years.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel A. Austin
Field worker
Complete

Slave Interview
October 27, 1936
John A. Simms
Editor

REFERENCE

- I. Personal interview with Samuel Simson Andrews
in the dormitory of Edward Waters College
Kings Road, Jacksonville, Florida



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Florida Writers' Club)
Jacksonville, Florida

J.E. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

1,450 Words
6 Pages

Slave Interview
November 17, 1936

Louis Napoleon

About three miles from South Jacksonville border
down the old Saint Augustine Road lived one Louis Napoleon an
ex-slave, born in Tallahassee, Florida about 1837, eight years
prior to Emancipation.

His parents were Scipio and Elith Napoleon, being
originally owned by Colonel John C. Smith of Jackson, Florida
and the Floyd family of Saint Marys, Georgia, respectively.

Scipio and Elith were sold to Arthur Wadsworth, a devel-
oper and large plantation owner of Fort Lewis, about five miles
from the capital at Tallahassee. On this large plantation that
covered well over of about eight miles and occupied approximately
of 30 slaves is where Louis Napoleon first saw the light of day.

Louis' father was known as the "Wagoner". The wagoner was
to haul the commodities raised on the plantation and other things
that required a mule. His mother Elith, was known as a "house-
wife" and was kept on the plantation to look after the
the Wadsworth family and slaves. The work was made from the cot-
ton raised on the plantation's fertile fields. As Louis was so
young, he had no particular duties, only to look for his father,



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gather eggs and play with the master's three young boys. There were seven children in the Randolph family, three young boys, two "middy" girls and two grown sons. Louis would go fishing and hunting with the three younger boys and otherwise amuse with them in their childish games.

He says that his master and mistress were very kind to the slaves and would never whip them, nor could he whip the "driver" who was a white man named Burton in so far as he was. Burton lived in a house especially built for him on the plantation. If the "driver" whipped any of them, his wife was responsible for the slave who had been whipped and to report it to the master and the "driver" was dismissed, as he was a married man.

Plantation Life. The slaves lived in log cabins especially built for them. They were heated and cooled in such a manner as to retain the heat in winter from the large fireplaces constructed therein.

Just before the dawn of day, the slaves were aroused from their slumber by a loud blast from a gun-barrel that was used by the "driver" as a signal to prepare themselves for the fields. The plantation being so extensive, those who had to go a long distance to the work where they worked, were taken in wagons, and carrying nearly naked. They took their meals along with them and had their breakfast and dinner on the fields. As much was allowed for this purpose. The slaves worked while they sang spirituals to break the monotony of long hours of work. At the setting of the sun, with their

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Any's work all done, they returned to their cabins and prepared their evening's meal. Having finished this, the religious among them would gather at one of the cabin doors and give thanks to God in the form of long supplications and old fashioned hymns. Many of them being highly emotional would respond in shouts of Hallelujah sometimes covering the entire group to secure "silence" sometimes in shouting and praise to God. The whole scene accompanied with great emotion in song and dance. Sometimes at one of the cabin doors they would sing and dance to the tune of a fife, some of fiddle and some played by one of their number. Finished with this dance or they would retire to their beds at the close of a new day which indicated more work. The various plantations had white men employed as "patrols" whose duties were to see that the slaves remained on their own plantations, and if they were caught going off without a permit from the master, they were whipped with a "raw hide" by two "drivers." There was an exception to this rule, however, on Sunday the religious slaves were allowed to visit other plantations where religious services were being held without having to go through the matter of having a permit.

Religion. There was a free colored man who was called "Father Jesse Papp," owned by a family of Barren of Tallahassee. He was freed by them to go and preach to his own people. He would read and write and would visit all the plantations in Tallahassee, preaching the gospel. Each plantation would get a visit from him one day of each month. The slaves on the Spanish plantations would come

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grange is one of the cabins to receive him where he would read the Bible and preach and sing. Many times the services were punctuated by such shouting from the "happy ones." At these services the ex-slaves were served in their own way except Christ, those who had not, were willing to accept Him. Many were baptized and baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

On the day of baptism, the candidates were attired in long white flowing robes, which had been made by one of the slaves. After singing a hymn they marched, singing, in a line to the pond or lake at the plantation and after the usual ceremony they were "baptized" into the water. This was a day of much shouting and praying.

Education. The two "white" girls of the household were careful about getting them to learn to read their catechism or Sunday School lesson. Aside from this there was no other training.

The War and Freedom. Mr. Napoleon relates that the master's two eldest sons went to the war with the Confederate army, also the white "driver," Marion. His place was filled by one of the slaves, named Peter Parker.

At the closing of the war, word was sent around among the slaves that if they heard the sound of a gun, it was the Yankees and that they were free.



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It was in May, in the middle of the day, cotton was being picked, plowing going on, and slaves busily engaged in their usual activities, when suddenly the loud report of a gun resounded, then could be heard the slaves crying almost en-masse, "dons de Yan-kees." Immediately they dropped the plows, hoes and other farm in-struments and hurried to their cabins. They put on their best clothes "to go and see the Yankee." Through the country side to the town of Tallahassee they went. The roads were quickly filled with these happy souls. The streets of Tallahassee were lined with these jubilant people going there and there to get a glimpse of the Yan-kees, their liberators. No longer was it a joyous and un-forgotten-able occasion.

When the Tallahassee slaves returned to their plantation, Dr. Humphreys told them that they were free, and if they wanted to go away, they could, and if not, they could remain with him and he would give them half of what was raised on the farm. Some of them left, however, some remained, having no place to go, they decided it was best to remain until the crops were off, then working would be hard then in winter was winter in New England. Those slaves who were too old and not physically able to work, remained on the plantation and were cared for by Dr. Humphreys until their death.

Humphreys's father, Col. John, was a transfer from the government to his father's master, Colonel Sumner of Arlington, and there he lived for a while. He was not acquainted with a Mr. Foster

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of the town and after earning enough money, bought a tract of land from him there and farmed. There his family lived and increased. Louis being the eldest of the children obtained odd jobs with the various settlers, among them being Governor Field of Florida who lived in South Jacksonville. Governor Field raised cattle for market and Harbison's job was to bring them across the Suwannee River on a raft to Jacksonville, where they were sold.

Louis Harbison is now aged and infirm, his father and mother having died many years ago. He now lives with one of his younger brothers who has a fair sized orange grove on the north side of Jacksonville. He recalls the property that his father first bought after freedom and on which they lived in Arlington. His hair white and he is bent with age and ill health but his mental faculties are exceptionally keen for one of his age. He proudly tells you that his master was good to his "colored" and doesn't recall but one time that he saw his whip and that when one tried to run away to the States. Only suspicion of a kind master in his days of servitude remain with him as he recalls the dark days of slavery.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

J.M. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
November 17, 1936

REVIEWED

Second Interview with Louis Dumas, South Jacksonville,
Florida

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American writer, (Barro & Barro, White)
Jacksonville, Florida

Barro A. Barro
Barro & Barro
Barro & Barro

339 Words
2 Pages

Slave Interview
November 20, 1933

Florida Clayton

The life of Florida Clayton is interesting in that it illustrates the discrimination prevalent during the days of slavery. Interesting also is the fact that Florida was not a slave even though she was a product of three turbulent lives. Many years before her birth- March 1, 1854- Florida's great grandfather, a white man, came to Tallahassee, Florida from Washington, District of Columbia, with his children whom he had by his Negro slave. On coming to Florida, he set all of his children free except one boy, Amos, who was sold to a Major and. For that reason this was done, no one knew. Florida, raised for the state in which she was born, was one of seven children born to a white mother (colored) whose father was a white man and David Clayton (white).

Florida, in a retrospective mood, can recall the "nigger stealer" and "nigger stealer" of her childhood. Mr. Barro and Mr. Barro, both white, specialized in catching runaway slaves with their trained bloodhounds. Her parents always warned her and her brothers and sisters to go in someone's yard whenever they saw these men with their dogs lest the ferocious animals tear them to pieces. In regards to the "nigger stealers," Florida tells of a covered wagon

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Rachel A. Austin
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which used to come to Tallahassee at regular intervals and camp in some secluded spot. The children, attracted by the old wagon, would be eager to go near it, but they were always told that "Dry Head and Bloody Bones," a ghost who didn't like children, was in that wagon. It was not until later years that Florida and the other children learned that the driver of the wagon was a "nigger stealer" who stole children and took them to Georgia to sell at the slave markets.

When she was 11 years old, Florida saw the surrender of Tallahassee to the Yankees. Three years later she came to Jacksonville to live with her sister. She married but is now divorced after 12 years of marriage.

Three years ago she entered the Old Folks Home at 1087 Franklin Street to live.

FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT
American Guide (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Rachel Austin,
Field Worker
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Slave Interview
November 20, 1936

- 1 Personal Interview with Florida Clayton,
1627 Franklin Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Guide)
Jacksonville, Florida

J.M. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete
1, 322 Words
7 Pages

Slave Interview
September 18, 1934
John A. Sims
Editor

Black Mallan, a former slave who now lives at 521 W. First Street, Jacksonville, Florida, was born in Americus, Georgia in 1847, eight years before Emancipation, on a plantation which covered an area of approximately five miles. Upon this extensive plantation about 200 slaves lived and labored. At its main entrance stood a large white colonial mansion.

In this abode lived Dick Swillings, the master, and his family. The Swillings plantation produced cotton, corn, oats, wheat, peanuts, potatoes, and other commodities. The live stock consisted primarily of hogs and cattle. There was on the plantation what was known as a "crib," where oats, corn and wheat were stored, and a "smoke house" for pork and beef. The slaves received their rations weekly; it was apportioned according to the number in the family.

Black Mallan's mother was named Ellen and his father Sam. Ellen was "house work" and Sam did the black-

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nothing. Ellen, ~~personally~~ attended Mrs. Gallimore, the master's wife. Mack being quite young did not have any particular duties assigned to him, but stayed around the Gallimores and played. Sometimes "Masther" Gallimore would take him on his knee and talk to him. Mack remembers that he often told him that some day he was going to be a noble man. He said that he was going to make him the head overseer. He would often give him candy and money and take him in his buggy for a ride...

Plantation Life: The slaves lived in cabins called quarters, which were constructed of lumber and logs. A white man was their overseer, he assigned the slaves their respective tasks. There was also a slave known as a "collar". He went around to the slave cabins every morning at five o'clock and blew a "cow-bell" which was the signal for the slaves to get up and prepare themselves for work in the fields.

All of them on hearing this horn would arise and prepare their work; by six o'clock they were on their way to the fields. They would work all day, stopping only for a brief period at midday to eat. Mack Johnson says that some of the most beautiful spirituals were sung while they labored.

The women were towels wrapped around their heads for protection from the sun and heat of their smoked pipes. The

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The overseer often took lunch with him astride his horse as he made his "rounds" to inspect the work being done. About sundown, the "boom-boom" of the guller was blown and all hands stopped work, and made their way back to their cabins. One behind the other they marched singing "I'm home - it's 1861 Jesus Come." After arriving at their cabins they would prepare their meals; after eating, they would sometimes gather in front of a cabin and dance to the tunes played on the fiddle and the drum. The popular dance at that time was known as the "figure dance." At nine p.m. the overseer would come around; everything was supposed to be quiet at that hour. One of the slaves would "turn in" for the night while others would remain up as long as they wished or as long as they were quiet.

The slaves were sometimes given special holidays and on these days they would give "quitting parties" (ball games) and dances. These parties were sometimes held on their own plantations, and sometimes on a neighboring one. Slaves who ordinarily wished to visit another plantation had to get a permit from the master. If they were caught going off the plantation without a permit, they were severely whipped by the "patrolman" (one who was especially assigned to patrol daily around the plantation to prevent promiscuous wandering from plantations and "runaways.")

Whipping: There was a white man assigned only to whip the slaves when they were incorrigible; however, they

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were not allowed to whip them too severely as "Master" Dillingham would not permit it. He would say "a slave was of no use to his master if he was beaten to death."

Marriage: When one slave fell in love with another and wanted to marry they were given a license and the ceremony was "wedded." There was no marriage ceremony performed. A license was all that was necessary to be considered married. In the event that the lovers lived in separate plantations the master of one of them would buy the other lover or wedded one so that they would be together. When this could not be arranged they would have to visit one another, but live on their respective plantations.

Religion: The slaves had a regular church house, which was a small stone building constructed of masonry. Services were conducted by a colored minister especially assigned to the duty. On Tuesday evenings prayer meeting was held; on Thursday evenings, preaching; and on Sunday, both morning and evening services. At these services the slaves sang "spirit songs" and sang psalms. These services to honor Christ were attended for baptism.

Baptism: On individual days, the slaves were baptized in white robes which they had made, carried down to the river where they were immersed by the minister. Slaves from neighboring

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J.M. Johnson
Jacksonville, Florida

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plantations would come to witness this sacred ceremony. Mack Mullen recalls that every time his "master" or owner to visit a baptist took him along in his launch. It was a busy scene, he relates. The slaves would be there in great numbers scattered about near the banks of the river. Much shouting and singing went on. Some of the "preachers" and "singers" would get up "stage" and they would lose control of themselves and "fall out." It was then said that the Holy Ghost had "fallen" on them. The other slaves would view this phenomenon with awe and reverence, and wait for him to "come out of it." "There were many signs and that was real religion," Mack Mullen said.

Education: The slaves were not given any formal education, however, Mullen's master was not as rigid as some of the slave-holders in prohibiting the slaves from learning to read and write. Mrs. Snellings, the mistress, taught Mack's mother to read and write a little, and Mr. Snellings also taught Mack's father how to read, write and figure. However, because a little they would in turn teach their children to read and write slaves.

Freedom: Mullen vividly recalls the day that they heard of their emancipation; Mack reports how they were heard coming through the woods and plantations; after while "Yankee" soldiers came and informed them that they were free. Mr. Snellings

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showed no resistance and he was not harmed. The slaves on
hearing this good news of freedom burst out in song and
praise to God; it was a glad day. No work was done for a
week; the time was spent in celebrating. The master told his
slaves that they were free and would go wherever they wanted
to, or they could remain with him if they wished. Most of his
slaves refused to leave him because he was considered a
good master.

They were thereafter given individual names, and
each slave was given a plot of land to cultivate and to keep their
own property and a share out of what was raised. There were
about thirty slaves, and each had a house and a garden.

Mark Mallon's parents were among these slaves
who remained; they lived there until Mr. Mallon died, and
then moved to Ironville, near Americus, Georgia, where his
father opened a blacksmith shop, and made money; they had
some property. Another slave was named John Smith, a girl
named Sarah. By this time Mark had become a young man with a
strong desire to travel, so he took his parents farewell and
headed for Tampa, Florida. After living there while he went to
Jacksonville, Florida. At the time of his arrival in Jackson-
ville, his mother was moved with him and there were no
other slaves in the city.

Also Interview
J.M. Johnson
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He was one of the construction foremen of the Windsor Hotel. That Miller is tall, grey haired, sharp featured and of Canadian origin (his mother was a Canadian) with a keen mind and an experience that makes him a valuable asset. He insists that he was fired because his master was afraid of him; he says he was everywhere and everyone was afraid of him. I'd want to see him - got to get Miller." (1)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Guide, (Under Western Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

J.H. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

Harry Johnson
September 18, 1938
John A. Brown
Editor

REPORT

1. From an interview with Mack Mallon, a former slave
at his residence, 221 East First Street, Jacksonville
Florida.



FEDERAL WRITING PAPER
American Office, (Paper Mills' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Pearl Harbor
Pic & Worker
Complete

1,601 Words
8 Pages

Slave Interview
December 18, 1936

How old are you?

Born on December 8, 1820, Harriett Creacher can recall quite clearly the major events of her life as a slave, since the Civil War as it affected the slaves of Charleston and Darrell, South Carolina.

She was one of a group of children belonging to Edward Ballinger, a wealthy plantation owner of Birnieville. With her mother, the plantation owner's wife and her father, a driver, she lived in the "big house" upstairs, and was known as a "house nigger." She played with the children of her slaves and often mixed with the other slaves on the plantation.

To quote some of her quaint expressions: "Money I
don't know I was any different from the children of
after the war. We played and at last fit together like children in
bound for to all over the world. Something else happened though
to remind me that I was just a piece of property."

"I heard a 'gun again' away at Fort Sumpter and for the first time in my life I knewed what it was for fear anythin' sept a spirit. No, I aint never seed one myself but--"

"By the goodness o' God I dare lived her with on her
citadel green and march down a hill o' soldiers in blue, in the

Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Jacksonville, Florida

Page 3
FEC

arms o' me husban', and over me hail de bay'nets shined."

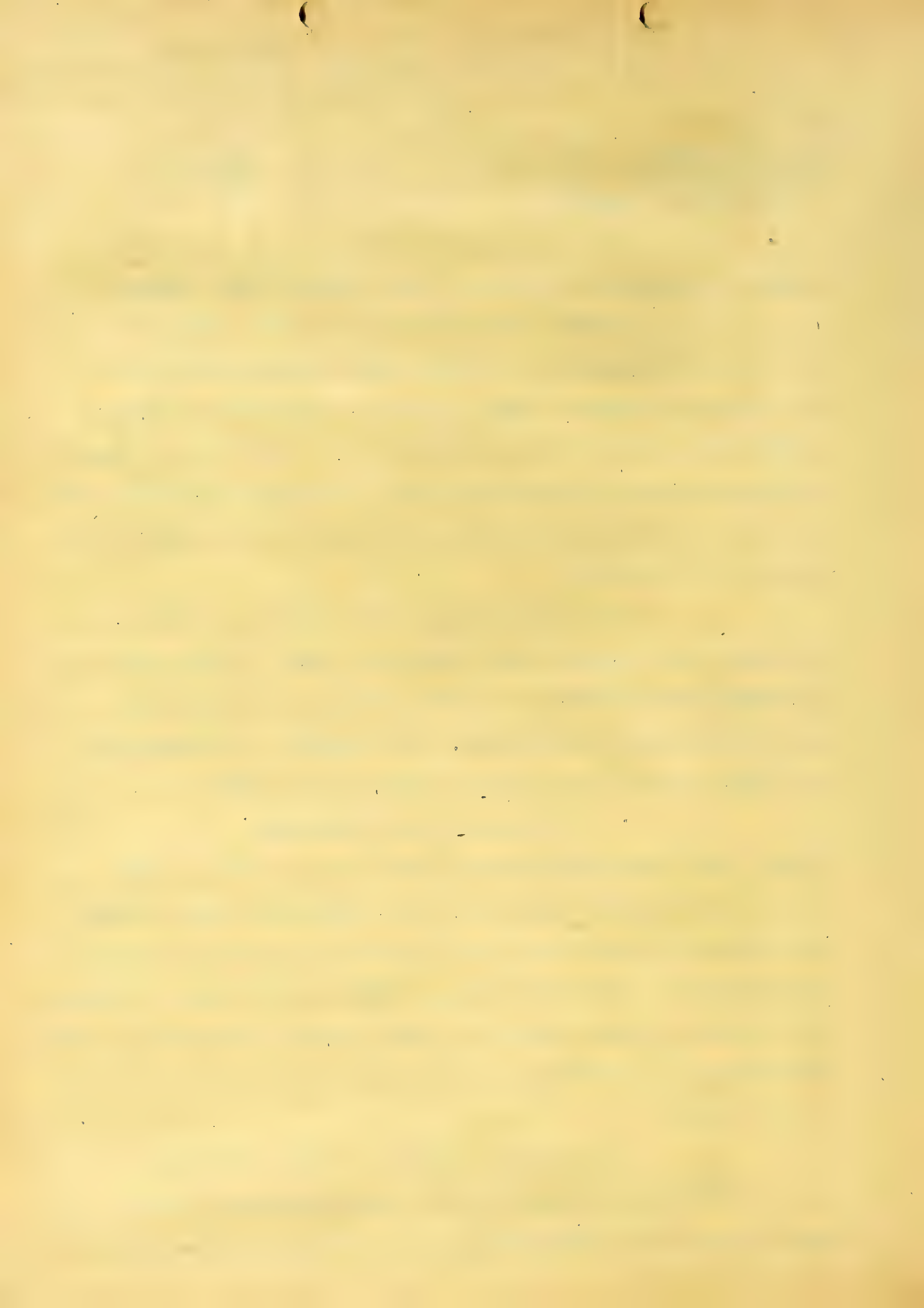
"I done lived up all my days and some o' dem what mighta b'longed ter somebody else is dey'd done right in der sight o' God." "How I know I so old?" "I got documents ter prove it." The documents is a yellow sheet of paper that appears to be stationary that is crudely decorated at the top with crissed crossed lines done in ink. Its contents in ink are as follows:

Harriett Pinckney, born September 25, 1740.
Adeline, her daughter, born October 1, 1809. Betsy, her daughter, born September 11, 1811. Belinda, her daughter, born October 4, 1813. Deborah, her daughter, born December 1, 1815. Stephen, her son, born September 1, 1818.

Harriett's Grandchildren-

Bella, the daughter of Adeline born July 5, 1827. Albert, son of Belinda born August 19, 1833. Laurence, son of Betsy born March 1, 1835. Sarah Ann Elizabeth, daughter of Belinda born January 3, 1836. Harriett, daughter of Belinda born December 6, 1838. (This record was given Harriett by Mrs. Harriett Bellinger, her mistress. Each slave received a similar one on being freed.)

As a child Harriett played about the premises of the Bellinger estate, leading a very carefree life as did all the slave children belonging to Edward Bellinger. Then she



Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Jacksonville, Florida

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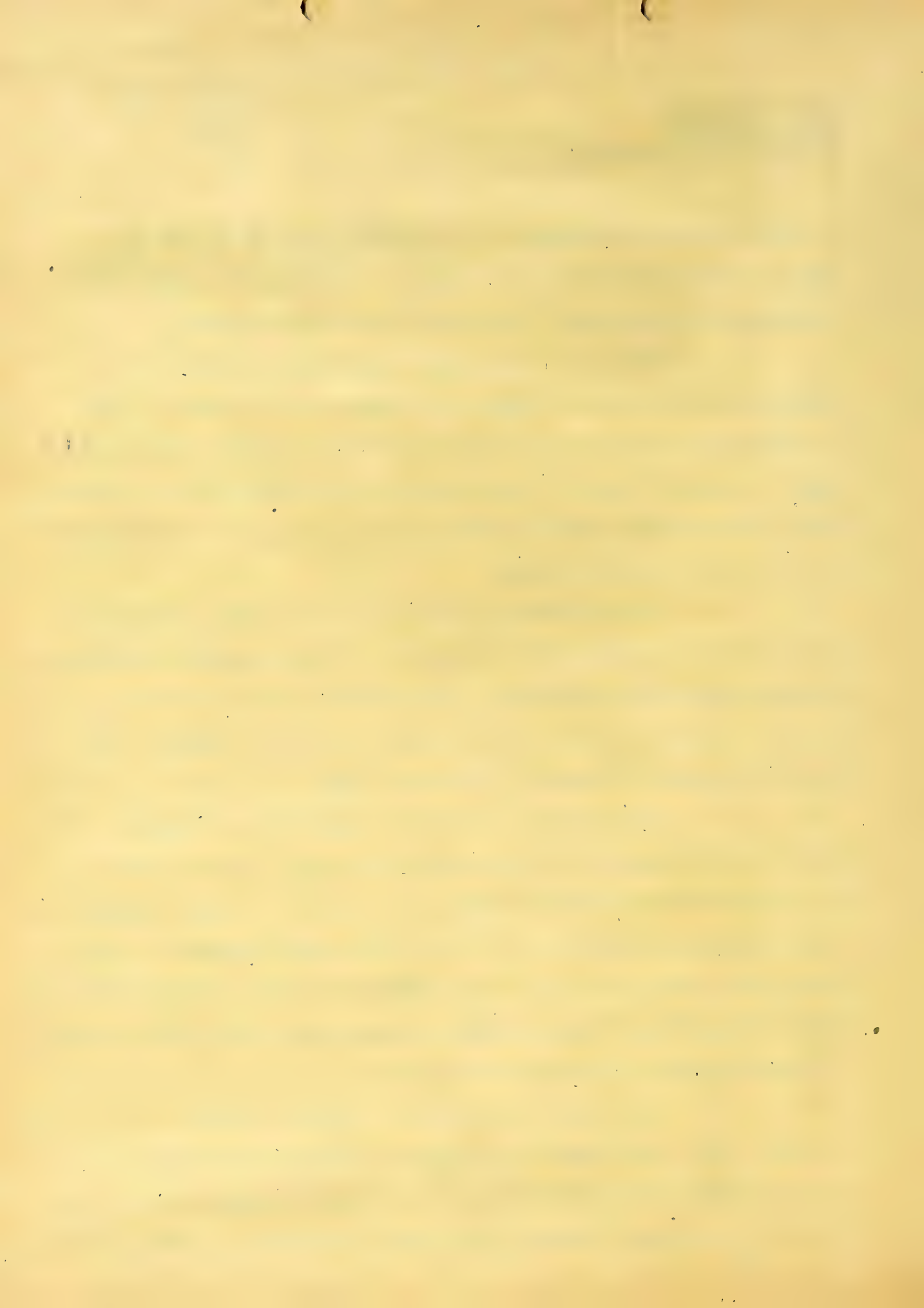
was about twelve years old she was given small tasks to do such as knitting a pair of stockings or dusting the furniture and ample time was given for each of these assignments.

This was a very large plantation and there was always something for the score of slaves to do. There were the wide acres of cotton that must be planted, hoed and gathered by hand. A special batch of slave women did the spinning and weaving, while those who had been taught to sew, made most of the clothing worn by slaves at that time.

Other products grown here were rice, corn, sugarcane, fruits and vegetables. Much of the food grown on the plantation was reserved to feed the slaves. While they must work hard to complete their tasks in a given time, no one was allowed to go hungry or forced to work if the least ill.

Very little had to be bought here. Candles were made in the kitchen of the "big house," usually by the cook who was helped by other slaves. These were made of beeswax gathered on the plantation. Shoes were made of tanned dried leather and reinforced with brass caps; the large herds of cattle, hogs and poultry furnished sufficient meat. Syrup and sugar were made from the cane that was carried to a neighboring mill.

Harriett remembers her master as being exceptionally kind but very severe when his patience was tried too far. Mrs. DeLinger was dearly loved by all her slaves because she was very thoughtful of them. Whenever there was a wedding, frolic or holiday



Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Jacksonville, Florida

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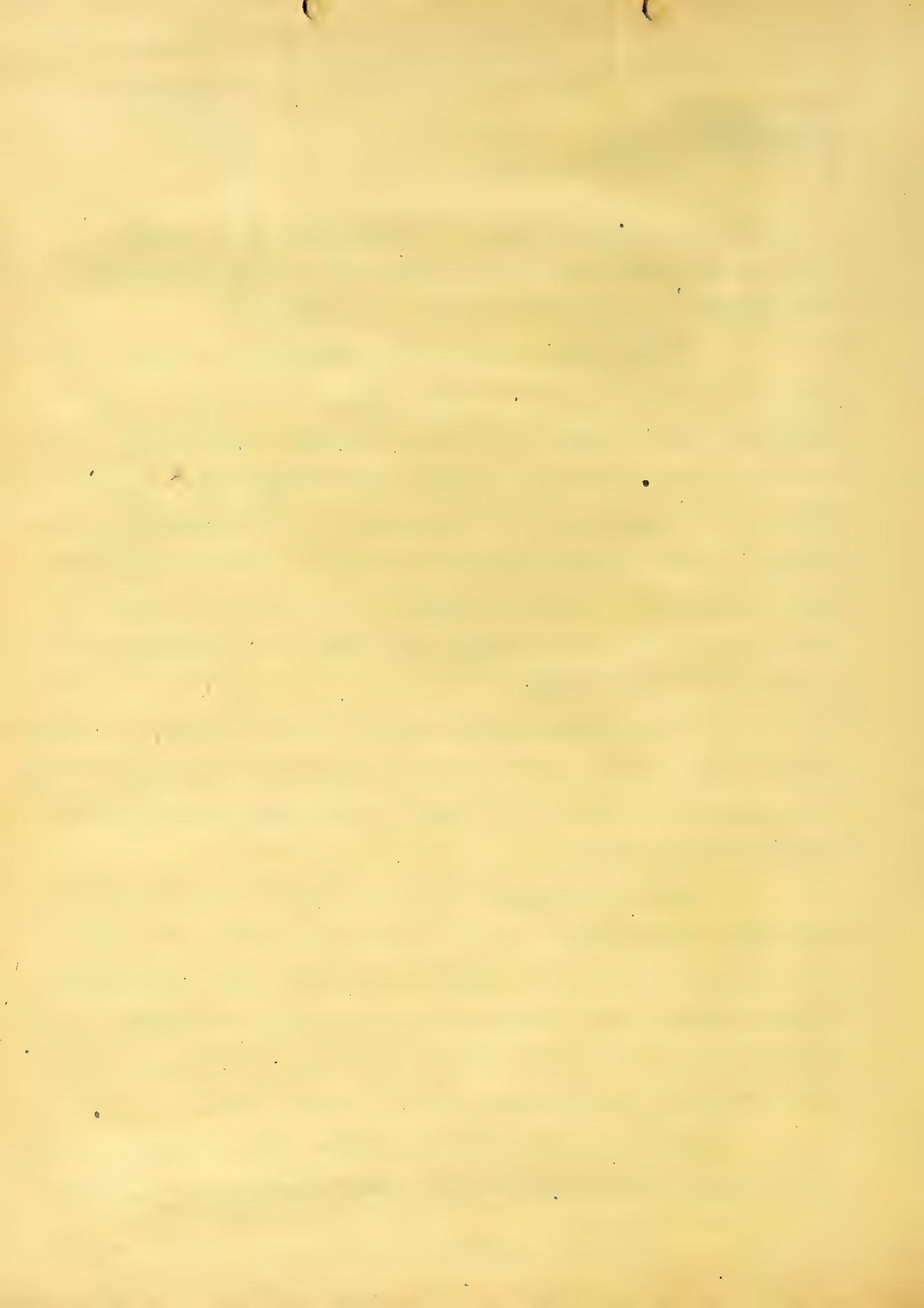
or quilting bee, she was sure to provide some extra "goody" and so dear to the hearts of the women were the cast off clothes she so often bestowed upon them on these occasions.

The slaves were free to invite those from the neighboring plantations to join in their social gatherings. A Negro preacher delivered sermons on the plantation. Services being held in the church used by whites after their services on Sunday. The preacher must always act as a peacemaker and mouthpiece for the master, so they were told to be subservient to their masters in order to enter the Kingdom of God. But the slaves held secret meetings and had praying grounds where they met a few at a time to pray for better things.

Harriett remembers little about the selling of slaves because this was never done on the Ballinger plantation. All slaves were considered a part of the estate and to sell one, meant that it was no longer intact.

There were rumors of the war but the slaves on the Ballinger place did not grasp the import of the war until their master went to fight on the side of the Rebel army. Many of them gathered about their mistress and wept as he left the home to which he would never return. Soon after that it was whispered among the slaves that they would be free, but no one ran away.

After living in plenty all their lives, they were forced to do without coffee, sugar salt and beef. Everything available



was bundled off to the army by Mrs. Hallinger who shared the popular belief that the soldiers must have the best in the way of food and clothing.

Harriett still remembers very clearly the storming of Fort Sumter. The whole countryside was thrown into confusion and many slaves were sad with fear. There were few men left to establish order and many women loaded their slaves into wagons and gathered such belongings as they could and fled. Mrs. Hallinger was one of those who held their ground.

When the Union soldiers visited her plantation they found the plantation in perfect order. The slaves going about their tasks as if nothing unusual had happened. It was necessary to summon them from the fields to give them the message of their freedom.

Harriett recalls that her mistress was very frightened but walked upright and held a trembling lip between her teeth as they waited for her to sound for the last time the horn that had summoned several generations of human chattel to and from work.

Some left the plantation; others remained to harvest the crops. One and all they remembered to thank God for their freedom. They immediately began to hold meetings, singing soul stirring spirituals. Harriett recalls one of these songs. It is as follows:

T'ank ye Harster Jesus, t'ank ye.

T'ank ye Harster Jesus, t'ank ye.

T'ank ye

Da Heben gwinter be my home.

No slav'ry chains to tie me down,
And no mo' driver's ho'n to blow for me
No mo' stocks to fasten me down
Jesus break slav'ry chain, Lord
Break slav'ry chain Lord,
Break slav'ry chain Lord,
Da Heben gwinter be my home.

Harriett's parents remained with the widowed woman for a while. Had they not remained, she might not have met Baylord Jeannette, the Knight in Blue, who later became her husband. He was a member of Company "I", 35th Regiment. She is still a bit breathless when she relates the details of the military wedding that followed a whirlwind courtship which had its beginning on the citadel green, where the soldiers stationed there held their dress parade. After these parades there was dancing by the soldiers and belles who had bedecked themselves in their Sunday best and come out to be wooed by a soldier in blue.

Music was furnished by the military band which offered many patriotic numbers that awakened in the newly freed Negroes that had long been dead- patriotism. Harriett recalls snatches of one of these songs to which she danced when she was 20 years of age. It is as follows:

Don't you see the lightning flashing in the case brakes,
Looks like we gonna have a storm
Although you're mistaken its the Yankee we



Going to fight for Uncle Sam.
Old master was a colonel in the Rebel army
Just before he had to run away-
Look out the battle is a-falling
The darkies gonna occupy the land.

Harriett believes the two officers who tendered congratulations shortly after her marriage to have been General Gates and Beecher. This was an added thrill to her.

As she lived a rather secluded life, Harriett Gresham can tell very little about the superstitions of her people during slavery, but knew them to be very reverent of various signs and omens. In one she places much credence herself. Prior to the Civil War, there were hordes of ants and everyone said this was an omen of war, and there was a war.

She was married when schools were set up for Negroes, but had no time for school. Her master was adamant on one point and that was the danger of teaching a slave to read and write, so Harriett received little "book learning."

Harriett Gresham is the mother of several children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Many of them are dead. She lives at 1305 west 31st street, Jacksonville, Florida with a grand daughter. Her second husband is also dead. She sits on the porch of her shabby cottage and sews the stitches that were taught her by her mistress, who is also dead. She embroiders, crochets.



slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Jacksonville, Florida

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knits and quilts without the aid of glasses. She likes to show her handiwork to passersby who will find themselves listening to some of her reminiscences if they linger long enough to engage her in conversation- for she loves to talk of the past.

She still corresponds with one of the children of her mistress, now an old woman living on what is left of a once vast estate at Barnwell, South Carolina. The two old women are very much attached to each other and each in her letters helps to keep alive the memories of the life they shared together as mistress and slave.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Pearl Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 18, 1936

REFERENCE

- I. Personal interview with Mariett Graham, 1205 West
31st, Street, Jacksonville, Florida

FEDERAL WRITING PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Viola B. Foss
Field Worker
Complete
1,888 Words
8 Pages

Slave Interview
December 2, 1936

"Father" Charles Oates

Father Charles Oates, as he is called by all who know him, was born a slave, 108 years ago at Richmond, Virginia, on the plantation of a man named L'Angle. His early boyhood days were spent on the L'Angle place filled with duties such as milking cows, cows, bringing in wood and such light work. His wearing apparel consisted of one garment, a shirt made to reach below the knees and with three quarter sleeves. He wore no shoes until he was a man past 25 years of age.

The single garment was worn summer and winter alike and the change in the weather did not cause an extra amount of clothes to be furnished for the slaves. They were expected to move about as fast as work that the heat from the body was sufficient to keep them warm.

When Charles was still a young man Mr. L'Angle sold him on time payment to W.B. Hall; who several years before the Civil War moved from Richmond to Washington County, Georgia, carrying 135 grown slaves and many children. Mr. Hall made Charles his carriage driver, which kept him from hard labor. Other slaves on the plantation performed such duties as milking



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Viola E. Muse
Jacksonville, Florida

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splitting, digging up trees by the roots and other hard work.

Charles Carter remembers vividly the conditions practiced on the Hall plantation. His duty was to see that all the slaves reported to work on time. The bell was rung at 5:00 a.m. by one of the slaves. Charles had the ring of the bell for three years; this was in addition to the work as driver. He tells with laughter how the slaves would "grab a piece of meat and bread and run to the field" as no time was allowed to sit and eat breakfast. This was a very different way from that of the master he had before, as Mr. L'Angle was much easier to his slaves.

Mr. Hall was different in many ways from Mr. L'Angle. "He was always pretending" says Charles that he did not want his slaves beaten unmercifully. Charles never spoke to Mr. Hall during work hours and opportunity to see and hear much about what was going on at the plantation. And he believes that Mr. Hall knew just how the overseer dealt with the slaves.

On the Hall plantation there was a contraption, similar to a gallows, where the slaves were suspended and whipped. At the top of this device were blades of wood with chains run through holes and high enough that a slave when tied to the chains by his fingers would barely touch the ground with his toes. This was done so that the slave could not shake or twist his body while being whipped. The whipping was continued until the body of the slave was covered with welts and blood trickled down his naked body.



Slave Interview
Viola B. Hunt
Jacksonville, Florida

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ETC

Women were treated in the same manner, and a pregnant woman received no more leniency than did a man. Very often after a severe flogging a slave's body was treated to a bath of water containing salt and pepper so that the pain would be more lasting and aggravated. The whipping was done with sticks and a whip called the "cut o' nine tails," meaning every lick hurt nine. The "cut o' nine tails" was a whip of nine strips attached to a stick; the strips were perforated so that everywhere the coils in the strips fell on the flesh a blister was left.

The treatment given by the overseer was very terrifying. He noticed how a slave was put in a room and looked up for two and three days at a time without water or food, because the overseer thought he hadn't done enough work in a given time.

Another offense which brought forth severe punishment was that of crossing the road to another plantation. A whipping was given and very often a slave was put on starvation for a few days.

One privilege given slaves on the plantation was appreciated by all and that was the opportunity to hear the word of God. The white people gathered in log and sometimes frame churches and the slaves were permitted to sit about the church yard on benches and on the ground and listen to the preaching. When the slaves wanted to hold church they had to get special permission from the master, and at that time a slave hut was used. A white preacher was called in and he would preach to them out to attend,



Slave Interview
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lie or run away and "be sure and sit all day outside and
born in a field and your master will think a heap of you."
Charles does not remember anything else the preacher told them
about God. They learned more about God when they sat outside the
church waiting to drive their masters and family back home.

Charles relates an incident of a slave named Quabo
who thought himself very smart and who courted the favor of the
master. The neighboring slaves screamed so loudly while being
whipped that Quabo told his master that he knew how to make a
contraption which, if a slave was put into while being whipped
would prevent him from making a noise. The device was made of two
blocks of wood cut to fit the head and could be fastened around
the neck tightly. When the head was put in the upper and lower parts
were clasped together around the neck so that the slave could not
scream. The same effect as choking. The stomach of the victim was
placed over a barrel which allowed freedom of movement. Then the
lash was administered and the slave whirled, the barrel revolved.

Now it so happened that Quabo was the first to be
put into his own invention for a whipping. The overseer pulled
the lash rather heavily and Quabo was compelled to writhle his body
to relieve his feelings. In whirling the barrel under his stomach
rolled a bit straining Quabo's neck and breaking it. After Quabo
died from his neck being broken the master discontinued the use
of the device, as he saw the loss of property in the death of slaves.

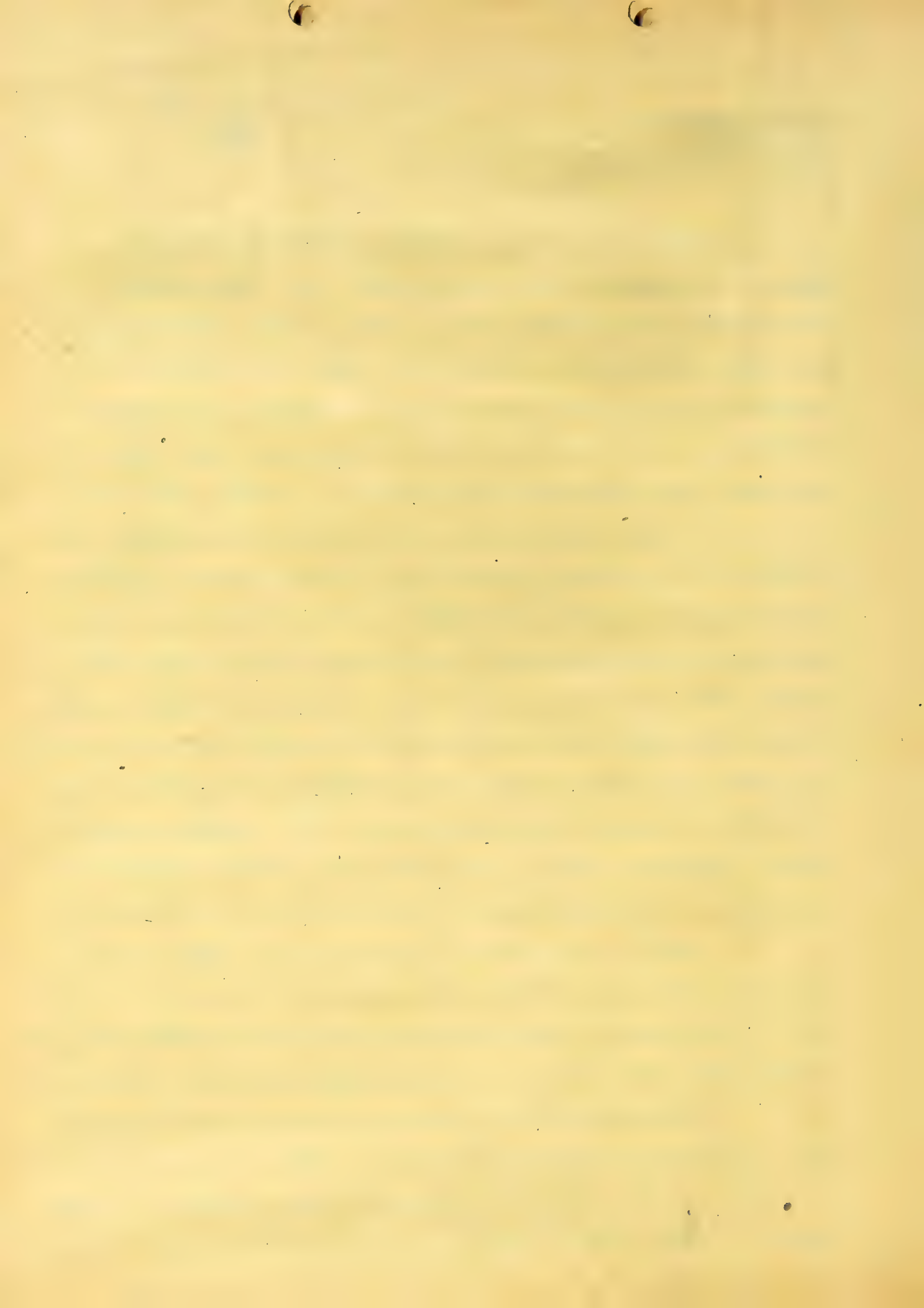
Slave Interview
Viola B. Muse
Jacksonville, Florida

Page 3
PCC

Charles was still a carriage driver when freedom came. He had opportunity to see and hear many things about the master's private life. When the news of the advance of the Union Army came, Mr. Hall carried his money to a secluded spot and buried it in an iron pot so that the soldiers who were confiscating all the property they could, would not get his money. The slave owners were required to notify the slaves that they were free so Mr. Hall sent his son Sheridan to the office to notify all the slaves to come into his presence and there he had his son to tell them that they were free. The Union soldiers took much of the slave owners' property and gave to the slaves telling them that if the owners took the property back to write and tell them about it; the owners only laughed because they knew the slaves could not read nor write. After the soldiers had gone the kind and good slave gave up most of the land; some few however, found in a bit of land while the soldiers remained in the vicinity and they managed to keep a little of the land.

Many of the slaves remained with the owners. There they worked for small monthly wages and took whatever was left of their off clothing and food and whatever the "old slaves" gave them. A pair of old pants of the master was highly prized by them.

Charles Gootie was glad to be free. He had been well taken care of and looked younger than 17 years of age at the close of slavery. He had not been married; had been put upon the block twice to be sold after belonging to Mr. Hall. Each time he was



Slave Interview
Viola H. Hues
Jacksonville, Florida

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offered for sale, his master wanted so much for him, and re-
fusing to sell him on time payment, he was always left on
his master's hands. His master said "being tall, healthy and
reliant, he was well worth much money."

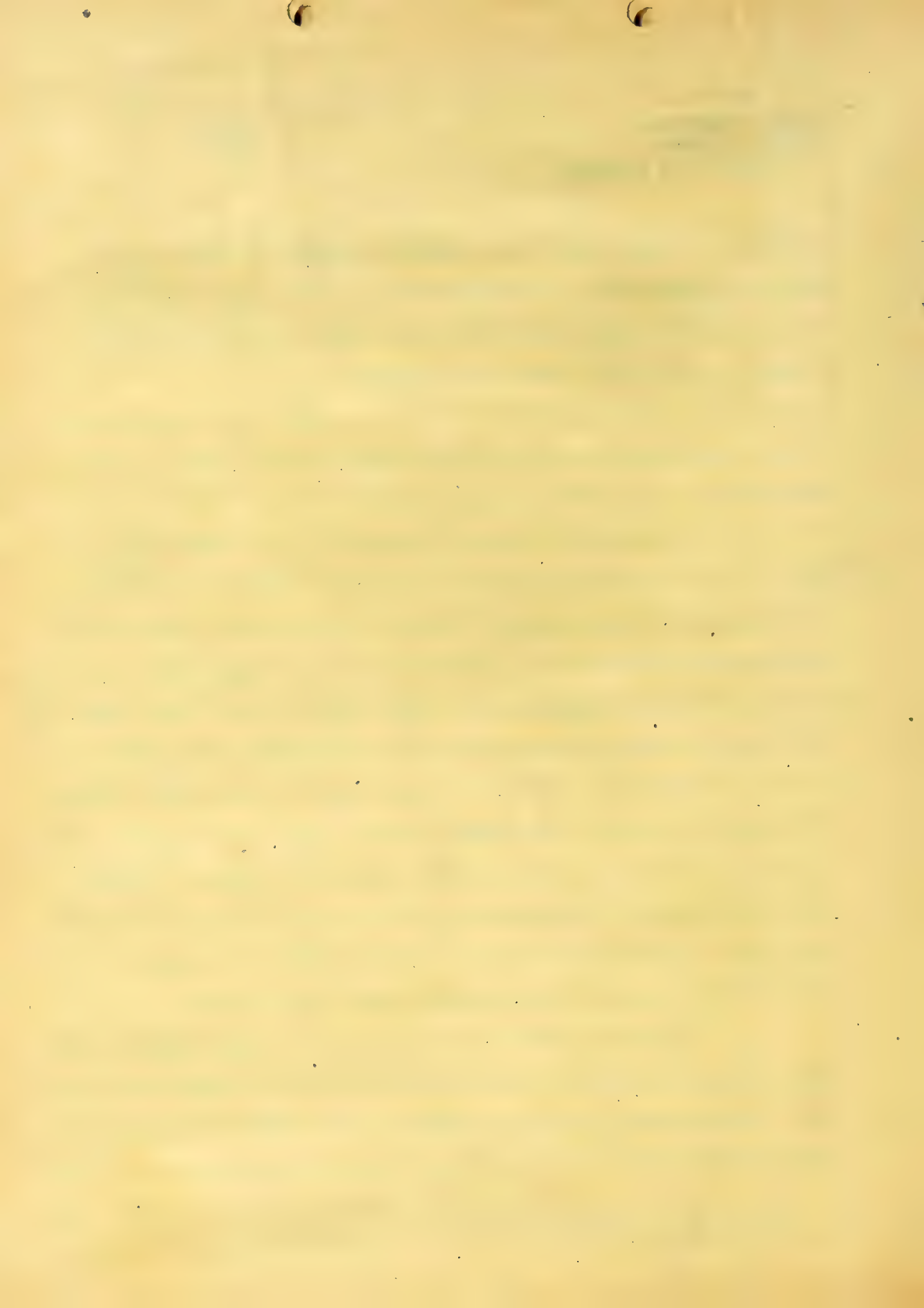
After slavery, Charles was raised as a good worker.
He at once began working and saving his money and in a short
time he had accumulated "around \$200."

The first sight of a certain young woman caused
him to fall in love. He says the love was mutual and after
a courtship of three weeks they were married. The girl's mother
told Charles that she had always been very frail, but he did not
know that she had consumption. Within three days after they were
married she died and her death caused much grief for Charles.

He was reluctant to bury her and wanted to continue
to stand and look at her face. A white doctor and a colored teacher
whose names he does not remember, told him to put his wife's
body in alcohol to preserve it and he could look at it all the
time. At that time white people who had plenty of money and wanted
to see the faces of their deceased loved ones

A glass cabinet was used and the bodies of the
deceased were placed in alcohol inside the cabinet. Another cabinet
made of wood held the glass cabinet and the whole was placed in a
vault made of stone or brick. The walls of the vault were left

about four feet above the ground and a window and door were



Slave Interview
Viola B. Hues
Jacksonville, Florida

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placed in front, so when theasket was placed inside of the vault the bereaved could lean upon the ledge and look in at the face of the deceased. The woodenasket was provided with a glass top part of the way so that the face could easily be seen.

Although the process of preserving the body in alcohol cost \$100, Charles did not regret the expense saying, "I had plenty of money at that time."

After the death of his wife, Charles left with his mother and father, Henrietta and Spencer Cates and went to Savannah, Georgia. He said they were so glad to go, that they walked to within 30 miles of Savannah, when they saw a man driving a horse and wagon who picked them up and carried them into Savannah. It was in that city that he met his present wife, Irene, and they were married about 1870.

There are nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren living and in March of 1936, when a party was given in honor of Father Cates' 108th birthday, one of each of the four generations of his family were present.

The party was given at the Clara White Mission, 615 West Ashley Street by Ertha M.W. White. Father Cates and his wife were very much honored and each spoke encouraging words to those present. On the occasion he said that the cause for his long life was due to living alone in nature, rising early, going to bed early and not dissipating in any way. He said "Don't" (jumped



Slave Interview
Viola B. Wynn
Jacksonville, Florida

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FRC

about a foot and a half from the floor and knocking his heels
together.) He does chores about the yard; looks years younger
than he really is and enjoys good health. His hair is partly
white; his memory very good and his chief delight is talking
about God and his goodness. He has preached the gospel in his
humble way for a number of years, thereby gaining the name of
"Father" Coates.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Violet B. Dunn
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 3, 1938

INTERVIEW

- I. Personal interview with Charles Ochsenschläger Florida
Street, Jacksonville, Florida

FEDERAL WRITING PROJECT
American Guide, (Hague Webster, Ed.)
Jacksonville, Florida

Martin D. Bishop
Field Worker
Complete
336 Words
2 Pages

Slave Interview
January 27, 1937

A Voluntary Slave For Seven Years

The story of a free Negro of Connecticut, who came south to observe conditions of slavery, found them very distasteful, then voluntarily entered that slavery for seven years is the interesting tale that Samuel Smith, 54 year old ex-slave of 1704 Johnson Street, Jacksonville, tells of his father Otto Smith.

Smith had been born in Connecticut, son of domestic slaves who were freed while he was still a child. He grew to young manhood in the northern state, making a living for himself as a carpenter and builder. At these trades he is said to have been very efficient.

Still unmarried at the age of about 30, he found in himself a desire to travel and see how other Negroes in the country lived. This he did, going from one town to another, working for periods of varying length in the cities in which he lived, eventually drifting to Florida.

His travels eventually brought him to Duval County, where he worked for a time as overseer on a plantation. On a nearby plant-



Slave Interview
Martin Richardson
Jacksonville, Florida

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ation where he sometimes visited, he met a young woman for whom he soon had a great affection. This plantation is said to have belonged to a family of Cones, and according to Smith, still exists as a large farm.

Smith wanted to marry the young woman, but a difficulty developed; he was free and she was still a slave. He sought her owner. Smith was told that he might have the woman, but he would have to "work out" her cost. He was informed that this would amount to seven years of work on the plantation, naturally without pay.

Withing a few days he was back with his belongings, to begin "working out" the cost of his wife. But his work found favor in his voluntary master's eyes; within four years he was being paid a small sum for the work he did, and by the time the seven years was finished, Smith had enough money to immediately purchase a small farm of his own.

Adversity set in, however, and eventually his children found themselves back in slavery, and Smith himself practically again enslaved. It was during this period that Smith was born.

All of the Florida slaves were soon emancipated, however and the voluntary slave again became a free man. He lived in the Suwannee County vicinity for a number of years afterward, raising a large family.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
January 27, 1937

REFERENCE

Personal interview with Samuel Smalls, ex-slave, 1724
Johnson Street, Jacksonville, Florida

25

●

Cato Smith.

son

His travels eventually brought him to Suwanee County, where he worked for a time as overseer on a plantation. ~~xxxxxx~~

Small's



Smith wanted to marry the young woman, but a difficulty developed: he was free and she was still a slave. He sought her owner.

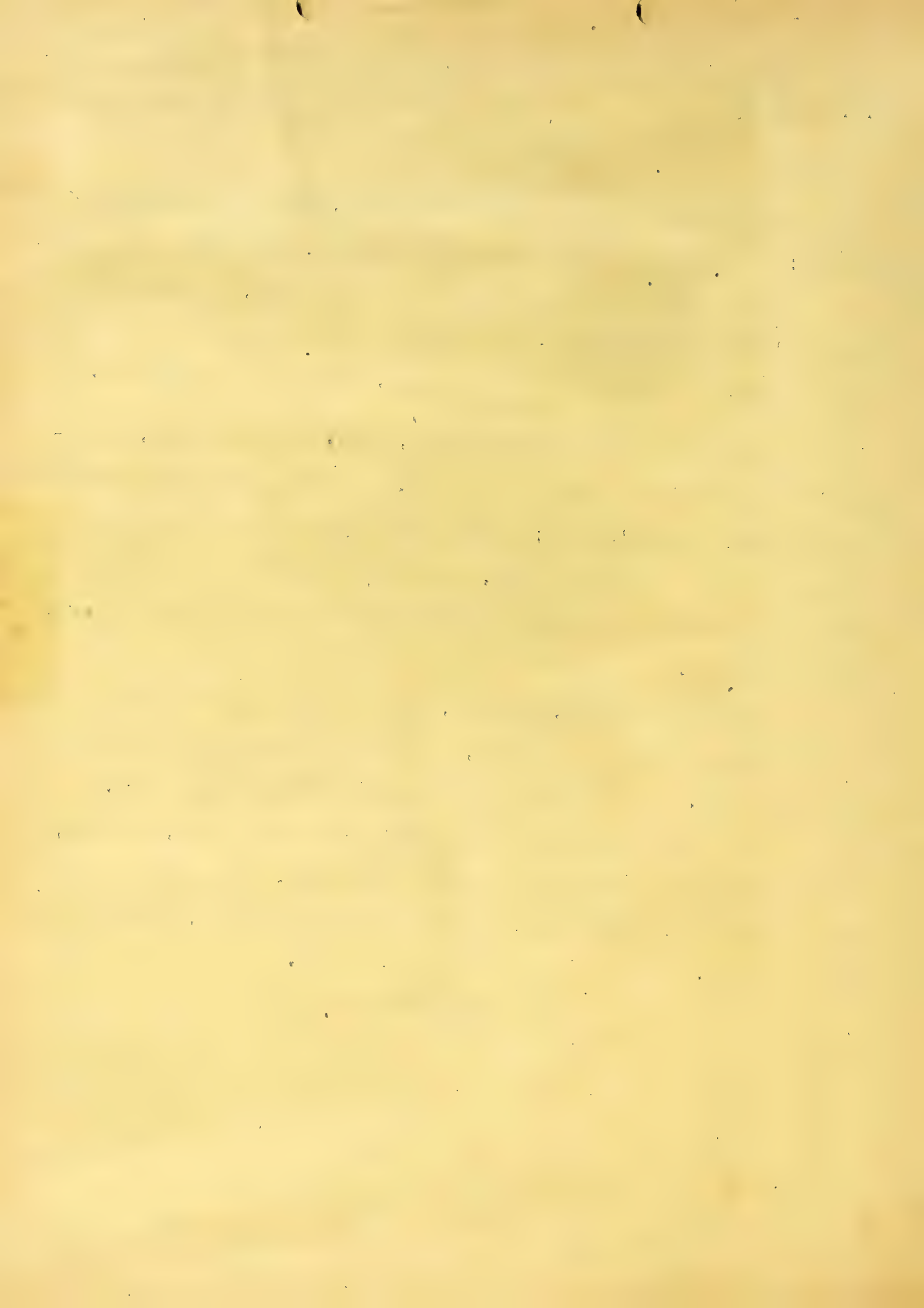
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JACKSONVILLE
SLAVE INTERVIEW
M.D.RICHARDSON

3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Interview with subject.



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

BILL AUSTIN

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
Slave Interview
Complete
986 words
4 Pages

Bill Austin --- he says his name is NOT Williams --- is an ex-slave who gained his freedom because his mistress found it more advantageous to free him than to watch him.

Austin lives near Greenwood, Jackson County, Florida, on a small farm that he and his children operate. He says that he does not know his age, does not remember ever having heard it. But he must be pretty old, he says, " 'cause I was a right smart size when Mistuh Smith went off to fight." He thinks he may be over a hundred -- and he looks it -- but he is not sure.

Austin was born between Greene and Hancock Counties, on the Oconee River, in Georgia. He uses the names of the counties interchangeably; he cannot be definite as to just which one was his birthplace. "The line between 'em was right there by us," he says.

His father was Jack; for want of a surname of his own he took that of his father and called himself Jack Smith. During a temporary shortage of funds on his master's part, Jack and Bill's mother were sold to a planter in the northern part of the state. It was not until long after his emancipation that Bill ever saw either of them again.

Bill's father Jack was regarded as a fairly good carpenter, mason and bricklayer; at times his master would let him do small jobs of repairing or building for neighboring planters. These jobs sometimes netted him hams, bits of cornmeal, cloth for dresses for his wife and children, and



Bill Austin
Martin Richardson
Greenwood, Florida

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other small gifts; these he either used for his small family or bartered with the other slaves. Sometimes he sold them to the slaves for money; cash was not altogether unknown among the slaves on the Smith place.

Austin gives an interesting description of his master, James Smith. He says that "sometimes he was real rich and all of us had a good time. The work wasn't hard then, cause if we had big crops he would borrow some help from the other white folks. He used to give us meat every day, and plenty of other things. One time he bought all of us shoes, and on Sunday night would let us go to wherever the preacher was holdin' meeting. He used to give my papa money sometimes, too.

But they used to whisper that he would gamble a lot. We used to see a whole lot of men come up to the house sometimes and stay up most of the night. Sometimes they would stay three or four days. And once in a while after one of these big things "Mistuh Smith would look worried, and we wouldn't get no meat and very little of anything else for a long time. He would be crabby and beat us for any little thing. He used to tell my papa that he couldn't have a d--- cent until he made some crops."

A few years before he left to enter the war the slave owner came into possession of a store near his plantation. This store was in Greensboro. Either because the business failed or because of another of his economic 'bad spells', ownership of his plantation passed to a man named Ribball and out of the slaves, with the exception of Bill Austin and one or two women --- either transferred with the plantation or sold. Bill was kept to do errands and general work around the store.

Bill learned much about the operation of the store, with the result that when Mr. Smith left with the Southern Army he left his wife and Bill to continue its operation. By this time there used to be frequent stories



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whispered among the slaves in the neighborhood --- and ran away with their masters into the country store --- of how this or that slave ran away, and with the white man-power of the section engaged in war, remained at large for long periods or escaped altogether.

These stories always interested Austin, with the result that one morning he was absent when Mrs. Smith opened the store. He remained away 'eight or nine days, I guess', before a friend of the Smiths found him near Macon and threatened that he would 'half kill him' if he didn't return immediately.

Either the threat --- or the fact that in Macon there were no really available food-stuffs to be eaten all day as in the store --- caused Austin to return. He was roundly berated by his mistress, but finally forgiven by the worried woman who needed his help around the store more than she needed the contrite promises and effusive declarations that he would 'behave alright for the rest of his life.'

And he did behave; for several whole months. But by this time he was 'a great big boy', and he had caught sight of a young woman who took his fancy on his trip to Macon. She was free herself; her father had bought her freedom with that of her mother a few years before, and did odd jobs for the white people in the city for a livelihood. Bill had thoughts of coming back to Macon, marrying her, and bringing her back 'to work for Missus with me.' He asked permission to go, and was refused on the grounds that his help was too badly needed at the store. Shortly afterward he had again disappeared.

'Missus', however, knew too much of his plans by this time, and it was a difficult task to have him apprehended in Macon. Bill may not have had



Bill Austin
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such great objections to the apprehension, either, he says, because by this time he had learned that the young woman in question had no slightest intention to give up her freedom to join him at Greensboro.

A relative of Mrs. Smith gave Austin a sound beating on his return; for a time it had the desired effect, and he stayed at the store and gave no further trouble. Mrs. Smith, however, thought of a surer plan of keeping him in Greensboro; she called him and told him he might have his freedom. Bill never attempted to again leave the place --- although he did not receive a cent for his work --- until his master had died, the store passed into the hands of one of Mr. Smith's sons, and the emancipation of all the slaves was a matter of eight or ten years' history!

When he finally left Greene and Hancock Counties --- about fifty-five years ago, Austin settled in Jackson County. He married and began the raising of a family. At present he has nineteen living children, more grandchildren than he can accurately tell, and is living with his third wife, a woman in her thirties.



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Trade, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
March 18, 1937

SUBJECTS

1. Henry Harvey, old resident of Jackson County; Greenwood-Malone Road, about 3 miles S. W. of Greenwood, Florida.
2. Interview with subject, near Greenwood, Florida, (Hwy. Route 2, Snooks).



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Legion, (Black Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Viola E. Baker

Slave Interview
March 21, 1947

Field Officer
Charlotte
2,400 copies
9 pages

Willie Williams

Willie Williams of 1024 Duval Street, Jacksonville, Florida, was born at Tallahassee, Florida, September 15, 1890. He was the son of James and Wilhelmina Williams, who belonged during the period of slavery to Thomas Hayward, a rich merchant of Tallahassee. Willie does not know the names of his paternal grand-parents but remembers his maternal grand-mother was Sarah Williams, who came down to visit the family after the Civil War.

Thomas Hayward, the master, owned a plantation out in the country from Tallahassee and kept slaves out there; he also owned a fine home in the city as well as a large grocery store and produce house.

Willie's mother, Wilhelmina, was the cook at the town house and his father, Williams, did carpentry and other light work around the place. He does not remember how his father learned the trade, but remembers that Mr. Hayward put him under a white carpenter until he was learned. The first he remembers of his father was that he did carpentry work.

At the time Willie was born and during his early life, even rich people like Mr. Hayward did not have cook stoves. They knew nothing of such. The only means of cooking was by fireplace, which, as he remembers, was wide with an iron rod across it. In the rod a large iron pot was suspended and in it food was cooked. An iron skillet with a lid was used



for baking and it also was used to cook up the other food. The common name for the stove was 'a fider' and every house had one.

Willis fared well during the first nine years of his life which were spent in slavery. To him it was the same as freedom for he was not a victim of any unkindness or cruelties as related by some other ex-slaves. He played base ball and looked after his younger brothers and sister while his mother was in the kitchen. He was never flogged but received chastisement once from the father of Mr. Hayward. That, he related, was light and not nearly as severe as many parents give their children today.

William, his mother, and the cook, saw to it that her children were well fed. They were fed right from the master's table, so to speak. They did not sit at the table with the master and his family, but ate the same kind of food that was served them.

Cornbread was baked in the Hayward kitchen but biscuits also were baked twice daily and the Negroes were allowed to eat as many as they wished. The dishes were made of tin and the drinking vessels were made from stumps. For white people had china dishes and when they did possess those they were highly prized and great care was taken of them.

The four other slaves which Mr. Hayward kept around the town house tended the garden and the many chickens, ducks and geese on the place. The garden afforded all of the vegetables necessary for feeding Master Hayward, his family and slaves. He did not object to the slaves eating chicken and green vegetables and sent provisions of all kinds from his store to them.

Although Mr. Hayward was wealthy there were many things he could not buy for Tallahassee did not afford them. Willis remembers that candles were mostly used for light. Home-made tallow was used in making them.



The moulds, which were made of wood, were of the correct size. Cotton string twisted right from the raw cotton was cut into desired length and placed in the moulds first, then heated tallow was poured in until they were filled. The tallow was allowed to set and cool, then they were removed, ready for use.

In those days coffee was very expensive and a substitute for it was made from parched corn. The whites used it as well as the slaves.

Billie remembers a man named Lucas who cured cow hides. He used to buy them and one time Billie skinned a cow and took the hide to him and sold it. Sixty-five and seventy years ago everyone used horses or mules and they had to have shoes. The blacksmiths were leather appliers and the horses and mules wore leather collars. No one knew anything about any other leather for making shoes so the tanning of hides was a lucrative business.

Clothing, during Civil War days and early Reconstruction, was simple as compared to present day times. Cloth woven from hemp or flax thread was the only kind Negroes had. Every house of any note could boast of a spinning wheel and loom. Cotton, picked by slaves, was cleaned of the seed and spun into thread and woven into cloth by them. It was common to know how to spin and weave. Some of the cloth was dyed afterwards with dyes made from indigo and yolk berries. Some was used in its natural color.

Cotton was the main product of most southern plantations and the owner usually depended upon the money from the sale of his young crop to maintain his home and upkeep of his slaves and cattle. It was necessary for every farm to yield as much as possible and much energy was directed toward growing and picking large crops. Although Mr. Heyward was a successful merchant, he did not lose sight of the fact that his country property



could yield a bountiful supply of cotton, corn and tobacco.

Around the town house Mr. Heyward maintained an atmosphere of home life. He wanted his family and his servants well cared for and spared no expense in making life happy.

As Willis remembers the beds were made of Florida moss and feathers. Boards were laid across for slats and the mattress placed upon the boards. On top of the moss mattress a feather one was placed which made sleeping very comfortable. In summer the feather mattress was often removed, sunned, aired and replaced in winter. Geese and the downy feathers of chickens were saved and stored in large bags until enough were collected for a mattress and it was considered a prize to possess one.

Every family of note boasted the ownership of a horse and buggy or several of each. The kind most popular during Willis' boyhood was the one-seated affair with a short wagon-like bed in the rear of the seat. Sometimes two seats were used. The seats were removable and could be used for carrying baggage or other light weights. The brougham, surrey and landau were unknown to Willis.

Before the Civil War and during the time the great struggle was in full swing, women wore hoop skirts, very full, held out with metal hoops. Bustlecoats were worn beneath them and around the ankle where they were gathered very closely, a ruffle edged with a narrow lace, finished them off. The waist was tight fitting bodice and sleeves which could be worn long or to elbow, were very full. Women also wore their hair high up on their heads with frills around the face. Negro women, right after slavery, fell into imitating their former mistresses and many of them who were fortunate enough to get employment used part of their earnings for at least one good dress. It was usually made of woolen a yard wide, or silk.



Money has undergone a change as rapidly as some other commonplace things. In Willis' early life, money valued at less than one dollar was made of paper just as the dollar, five dollar or ten dollar bills were. There was a difference however, in the paper representing 'change' and not as much care was taken in protecting it from being imitated. The paper money used for change was called "shin plasters" and much of it flooded the southland during Civil War days.

Mr. Heyward did not enlist in the Army to help protect the South's cause but his eldest son, Charlie, went. His younger son was not old enough to go. Willis stated that Mr. Heyward did not go because he was in business and was needed at home to look after it. It is not known whether Charlie was killed at war or not, but, Willis said he did not return home at the close of war.

When the news of freedom came to Thomas Heyward's town slaves it was brought by McCook's Cavalry. Willis remembers the uniforms worn by the northerners was dark blue with brass buttons and the Confederates wore gray. After the cavalry reached Tallahassee, they separated into sections, each division taking a different part of the town. Negroes of the household were called together and were informed of their freedom. It is remembered by Willis that the slaves were jubilant but not boastful.

Mr. Heyward was dealt a hard blow during the war; his store was confiscated and used as a commissary by the northern army. When the war ended he was deprived of his slaves and a great portion of his former wealth vanished with their going.

The loss of his wealth and slaves did not bitter Mr. Heyward; to the contrary, he was as kindhearted as in days past.

McCook's Cavalry did not remain in Tallahassee very long and was



replaced by a colored company; the 88th Infantry. Their duty was to maintain order within the town. An orchestra was with the outfit and Willie remembers that they were very good musicians. A Negro who had been the slave of a man of Tallahassee was a member of the orchestra. His name was Singleton and his former master invited the orchestra to come to his house and play for the family. The Negroes were glad to render service, went, and after that entertained many white families in their homes.

The southern soldiers who returned after the war appeared to receive their defeat as good 'sports' and not as much friction between the races existed as would be imagined. The ex-slave, while he was glad to be free, wanted to be sheltered under the 'wings' of his former master and mistress. In most cases they were hired by their former owners and once again worked around the home or plantation. This was true of Tallahassee, if not of other sections of the south.

Soon after the smoke of the cannons had died down and people began thinking of the future, the Negroes turned their thoughts toward education. They grasped every opportunity to learn to read and write. Schools were fostered by northern white abolitionists and white women were sent into the southland to teach the colored boys and girls to read, write and figure. Any Negro who had been fortunate enough to gain some knowledge during slavery could get a position as school teacher. As a result many poorly prepared persons entered the school room as tutor.

William Williams, Willie's father, found work at the old Florida Central and Peninsular Railroad yards and worked for many years there. He sent his children to school and Willie advanced rapidly.

During slavery Negroes attended church, out in the balcony, and very often log churches were built for them. Meetings were held under



"bush harbors." After the war frame and log churches served them as places of worship. These buildings were erected by whites who came into the southland to help the ex-slave. Negro men who claimed God had called them to preach served as ministers of most of the Negro churches but often white preachers visited them and instructed them concerning the Bible and what God wanted them to do. Services were conducted three times a day on Sunday, morning at eleven, in afternoon about three and at night at eight o'clock.

The manner of worship was very much in keeping with present day modes. Preachers appealed to the emotions of the 'flock' and the congregation responded with "amens," "halleluia," clapping of hands, shouting and screaming. Willis remembered to one white man during his early life, that he wondered why the people yelled so loudly and the man replied that in fifty years hence the Negroes would be educated, know better and would not do that. He further replied that fifty years ago the white people screamed and shouted that way. Willis wonders now when he sees both white and colored people responding to preaching in much the same way as in his early life if education has made much difference in many cases.

Much superstition and ignorance existed among the Negroes during slavery and early reconstruction. Some wore bags of sulfur saying they would keep away disease. Some wore bags of salt and charcoal believing that evil spirits would be kept away from them. Others wore a silver coin in their shoes and some made holes in the coin, threaded a string through it, attached it to the ankle so that no one could conjure them. Some who thought an enemy might sprinkle "greasy dust" around their door steps swept very clean around the door step in the evening and allowed no one to come in afterwards.

The Negro men who spent much time around the "grannies" during



slavery learned much about herbs and roots and how they were used to cure all manner of ills. The doctor gave practically the same kind of medicine for most ailments. The white doctors at that time had not been schooled to a great extent and carried medicine bags around to the sick from which contained pills and a very few other kinds of medicines which they had made from herbs and roots. Some of these are used to-day but Willis said most of their medicines were pills.

Five years after the Civil War Willis Williams had advanced in his studies to the extent that he passed the government examination and became a railway mail clerk. He ran from Tallahassee to Talatua and River Junction on the Florida Central and Peninsular railroad. There was no other railroad going into Tallahassee then.

The first Negro railway mail clerk according to Willis' knowledge running from Tallahassee to Jacksonville, was Benjamin F. Cox. The first colored mail clerk in the Jacksonville Post Office was W. J. Hughes. He was sent to prison for rifling the mail. Willis Myers succeeded Hughes and Willis Williams succeeded Myers. Willis received a telegram to come to Jacksonville to take Myers' place and when he came expected to stay three or four days, but, after getting here was retained permanently and remained in the service until his retirement.

His first run from Tallahassee to Talatua and River Junction began in 1875 and lasted until 1879. In 1879 he was called to Jacksonville to succeed Myers and when he retired forty years later, had filled the position creditably, therefore was retired on a pension which he will receive until his death.

Willis Williams is in good health, attends Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church of which he is a member. He possesses all of his faculties and is able to carry on an intelligent conversation on his fifty years in Jacksonville.



REPORT OF THE
American Guide, (Home Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Viola H. Hase
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
March 21, 1937

SLAVE INTERVIEW

1. Interview with Willie Williams, 1025 Myerson Street, Jacksonville
Florida.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
South Jacksonville, Florida

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
Complete
1,500 Words
6 Pages

Slave Interview
December 8, 1936

Shack Thomas, Centennarian

Beady-eyed, grey-whiskered, black little Shack Thomas sits in the sun in front of his hut on the Old Saint Augustine Road about three miles south of Jacksonville, 102 years old and full of humorous reminiscences about most of those years. To his frequent visitors he relates tales of his past, disjointedly sometimes but with a remarkable clearness and conviction.

The old ex-slave does not remember the exact time of his birth, except that it was in the year 1834, "the day after the end of the Indian War." He does not recall which of the Indian wars, but says that it was while there were still many Indians in West Florida who were very hard for him to understand when he got big enough to talk to them.

He was born, he says on, "a great big place that b'longed to Mister Jim Campbell; I don't know just exactly how big, but there was a lot of us working on it when I was a little fellow." The place was evidently one of the plantations near Tallahassee; Thomas remembers that as soon as he was large enough he helped his parents and others raise "corn, peanuts, a little bit of cotton and



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South Jacksonville, Florida

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potatoes. Squash just grew wild in the woods; we used to eat them when we couldn't get anything else much."

The centenarian remembers his parents clearly; his mother was one Nancy and his father's name was Adam. His father, he says, used to spend hours after the candles were out telling him and his brothers about his capture and subsequent slavery.

Adam was a native of the west Coast of Africa, and when quite a young man was attracted one day to a large ship that had just come near his home. With many others he was attracted aboard by bright ^{red} handkerchiefs, shawls and other articles in the hands of the seamen. Shortly afterwards he was securely bound in the hold of the ship, to be later sold somewhere in America. Thomas does know exactly where Adam landed, but knows that his father had been in Florida many years before his birth. "I guess that's why I can't stand red things now," he says; "my pa hated the sight of it."

Thomas spent all of his enslaved years on the Campbell plantation, where he describes pre-emancipation conditions as better than "he used to hear they was on the other places." Campbell himself is described as moderate, if not actually kindly. He did not permit his slaves to be beaten to any great extent. "The most he would give us was a 'switching', and most of the time we could pray out of th

"But sometimes he would get a hard man working for though," the old man continues. "One of them used to 'buck and ga This he describes as a punishment used particularly with runaway



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where the slave would be gagged and tied in a squatting position and left in the sun for hours. He claims to have seen other slaves suspended by their thumbs for varying periods; he repeats, though, that these were not Campbell's practices.

During the years before "surrinder", Thomas saw much traffic in slaves, he says. Each year around New Years, itinerant "speculators" would come to his vicinity and either hold a public sale, or lead the slaves, tied together, to the plantation for inspection or sale.

" A whole lot of times they wouldn't sell 'em, they'd just trade 'em like they did horses. The man(plantation owner) would have a couple of old women who couldn't do much any more, and he'd swap 'em to the other man for a young 'un. I seen lots of 'em traded that way, and sold for money too."

Thomas recalls at least one Indian family that lived in his neighborhood until he left it after the War. This family, he says, did not work, but had a little place of their own. "They didn't have much to do with nobody, though," he adds.

Others of his neighbors during these early years were abolition-minded white residents of the area. These, he says would take in runaway slaves and "either work 'em or hide 'em until they could try to get North. " When they'd get caught at it, though, they'd take 'em to town and beat 'em like they would us, then take their places and run 'em out."



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Later he came to know the "pu-trols" and the "refugees." Of the former, he has only to say that they gave him a lot of trouble every time he didn't have a pass to leave- "they only give me one twice a week," - and of the latter that it was they who induced the slaves of Campbell to remain and finish their crop after the Emancipation, receiving one-fourth of it for their share. He states that Campbell exceeded this amount in the division later.

After "surrinder" Thomas and his relatives remained on the Campbell place, working for \$5 a month, payable at each Christmas. He recalls how rich he felt with this money, as compared with the other free Negroes in the section. All of the children and his mother were paid this amount, he states.

The old man remembers very clearly the customs that prevailed both before and after his freedom. On the plantation, he says, they never faced actual want of food, although his meals were plain. He ate mostly corn meal and bacon, and squash and potatoes, he adds "and every now and then we'd eat more than that." He doesn't recall exactly what, but says it was "Oh, lots of greens and cabbage and syrul, and sometimes plenty of meat too."

His mother and the other women were given white cotton- he thinks it may have been duck- dresses "every now and then", he states, but none of the women really had to confine themselves to white, "cause they'd dye 'em as soon as thye'd get 'em." For dye, he says they would boil wild indigo, poke berries, walnuts and some tree for which he has an undecipherable name.



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Campbell's slaves did not have to go barefoot- not during the colder months, anyway. As soon as winter would come, each one of the was given a pair of bright, untanned leather "brogans," that would be the envy of the vicinity. Soap for the slaves was made by the women of the plantation; by burning cockle-burrs, black-jack wood and other materials, then adding the accumulated fat of the past few weeks. For light they were given tallow candles. Asked if there was any certain time to put the candles out at night, Thomas answers that "Mr. Campbell didn't care how late you stayed up at night, just so you was ready to work at daybreak."

The ex-slave doesn't remember any feathers in the covering for his pallet in the corner of his cabin, but says that Mr. Campbell always provided the slaves with blankets and the women with quilts.

By the time he was given his freedom, Thomas had learned several trades in addition to farming; one of them was carpentry. When he eventually left his \$5 a month job with his master, he began travelling over the state, a practice he has not discontinued until the present. He worked, he says, "in such towns as Perry, Sarasota, Clearwater and every town in Florida down to where the ocean goes under the bridge." (Probably Key West.)

He came to Jacksonville about what he believes to be half a century ago. He remembers that it was "ever so long before the fire" (1901) and "way back there when there wasn't but three families over here in South Jacksonville: the Sahds, the Hendricks and the Oaks. I worked for all of them, but I worked for Mr. Bowden the longest."



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The reference is to R.L. Bowden, whom Thomas claims as one of his first employers in this section.

The old man has 22 children, the eldest of those living, looking older than Thomas himself. This "child" is fifty-odd years. He has been married three times, and lives now with his 50 year old wife.

In front of his shack is a huge, spreading oak tree. He says that there were three of them that he and his wife tended when they first moved to Jacksonville." That one there was so little that I used to trim it with my pocket-knife," he states. The tree he mentioned is now about two- and-a-half feet in diameter.

"Right after my first wife died, one of them trees withered," the old man tells you. "I did all I could to save the other one, but pretty soon it was gone too. I guess this other one is waiting for me," he laughs, and points to the remaining oak.

Thomas protests that his health is excellent, except for "just a little haze that comes over my eyes, and I can't see so good." He claims that he has no physical aches and pains. Despite the more than a century his voice is lively and his hearing fair, and his desire for travel still very much alive. When interviewed he had just completed a trip to a daughter in Clearwater, and "would have gone farther than that, but my son wouldn't send me no fare like he promised!



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
South Jacksonville, Florida

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 8, 1936

REFERENCE

- I. Interview with subject, Shack, Thomas, living on
Old Saint Augustine Road, South Jacksonville, Florida



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
South Jacksonville, Florida

James Johnson
Field Worker
Complete
1,444 Words
7 Pages

Slave Interview
January 11, 1937

Douglas Dorsey

In South Jacksonville, on the Spring Glen Road lives Douglas Dorsey, an ex-slave, born in Duval County, Florida in 1851, fourteen years prior to freedom. His parents Charlie and Anne Dorsey were natives of Maryland and free people. In those days, Dorsey relates there were people known as "Wigger Traders" who used any subterfuge to catch Negroes and sell them into slavery. There was one Jeff Davis who was known as a professional "Wigger Trader," his slave boat docked in the slip at Maryland and Jeff Davis and his henchmen went out looking for their victims. Unfortunately, his mother Anne and his father were caught one night and were bound and gagged and taken to Jeff Davis' boat which was waiting in the harbor, and there they were put into stocks. The boat stayed in port until it was loaded with Negroes, then sailed for Florida where Davis disposed of his human cargo.

Douglas Dorsey's parents were sold to Colonel Louis Natair, who had a large plantation that was cultivated by 85 slaves. Colonel Natair's house was of the pretentious southern



Slave Interview
James Johnson
South Jacksonville, Florida

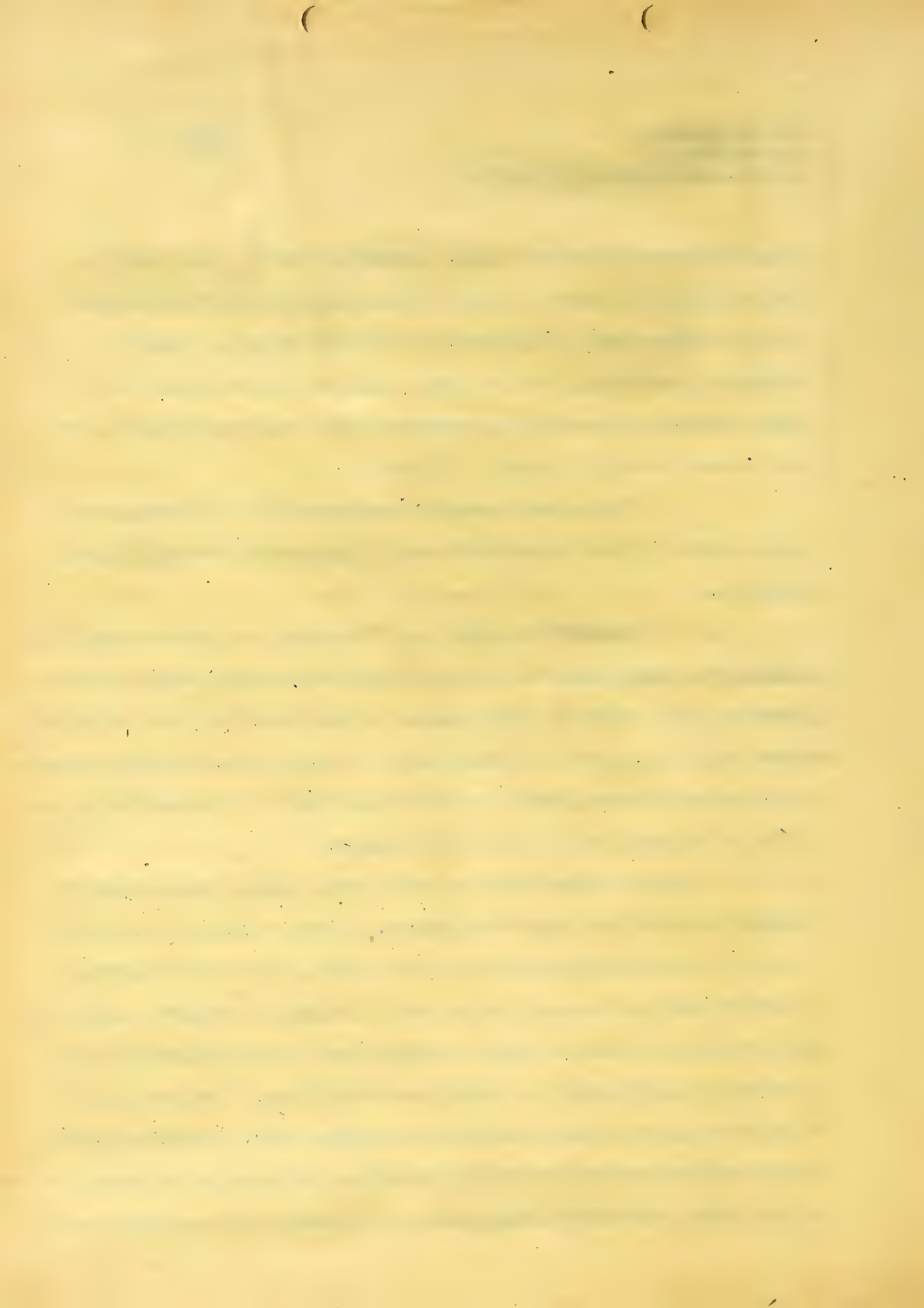
Page 3
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colonial type which was quite prevalent during that period. The colonel had won his title because of his participation in the Indian War in Florida. He was the typical wealthy southern gentleman, and was very kind to his slaves. His wife, however was just the opposite. She was exceedingly mean and could easily be termed a tyrant.

There were several children in the Matair family and their home and plantation were located in Suwannee County, Florida.

Douglas' parents were assigned to their tasks, his mother was house-wid and his father was the mechanic, having learned this trade in Maryland as a free man. Charlie and Anna had several children and Douglas was among them. When he became large enough he was kept in the Matair home to build fires, assist in serving meals and other chores.

Mrs. Matair being a very cruel woman, would whip the slaves herself for any misdemeanor. Dorsey recalls an incident that is hard to obliterate from his mind, it is as follows: Dorsey's mother was called by Mrs. Matair, not hearing her, she continued with her duties, suddenly Mrs. Matair burst out in a frenzy of anger over the woman not answering. Anna explained that she did not hear her call, thereupon Mrs. Matair seized a large butcher knife and struck at Anna, attempting to ward off the blow, Anna received a long gash on the arm that laid her up for



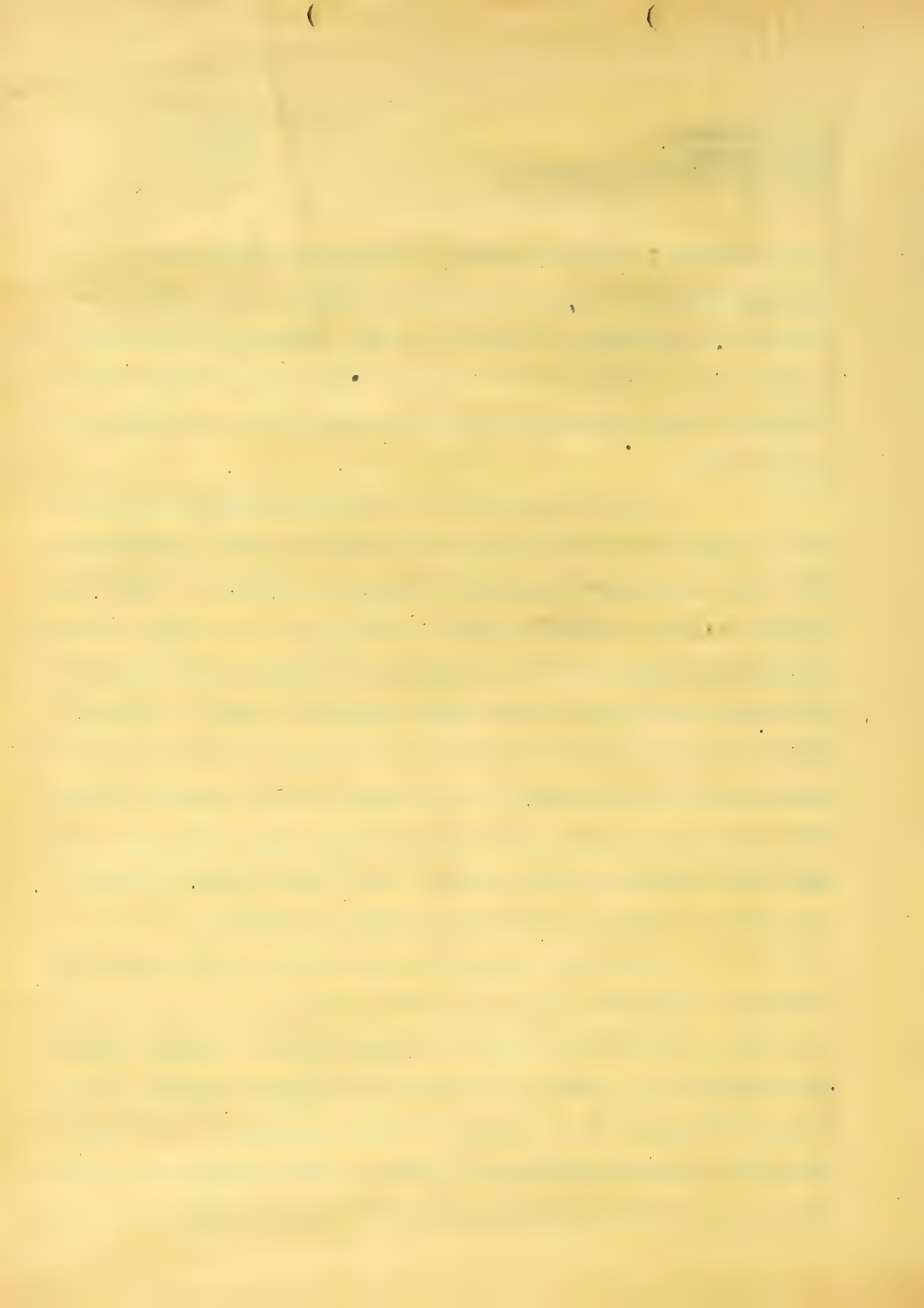
Slave Interview
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FRC

for some time. Young Douglas was a witness to this brutal treatment of his mother and he at that moment made up his mind to kill his mistress. He intended to put strychnine that was used to kill rats into her coffee that he usually served her. Fortunately freedom came and saved him of this act which would have resulted in his death.

He relates another incident in regard to his mistress as follows: To his mother and father was born a little baby boy, whose complexion was rather light. Mrs. Hatair at once began accusing Colonel Hatair as being the father of the child. Naturally the colonel denied, but Mrs. Hatair kept harassing him about it until he finally agreed to his wife's desire and sold the child. It was taken from its mother's breast at the age of eight months and auctioned off on the first day of January to the highest bidder. The child was bought by a Captain Rose and taken across the Suwannee River into Hamilton County. Twenty years later he was located by his family, he was a grown man, married and farming.

Young Douglas had the task each morning of carrying the Hatair children's books to school. Willie, a boy of eight would teach Douglas what he learned in school, finally Douglas learned the alphabet and numbers. In some way Mrs. Hatair learned that Douglas was learning to read and write. One morning after breakfast she called her son Willie to the dining room where she was seated and then sent for Douglas to come there too. She then took a pill



Slave Interview
James Johnson
South Jacksonville, Florida

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pen the kind used at that time, and began writing the alphabet and numerals as far as ten. Holding the paper up to Douglas, she asked him if he knew what they were; he proudly answered in the affirmative, not suspecting anything. She then asked him to name the letters and numerals, which he did, she then asked him to write them, which he did. When he reached the number ten, very proud of his learning, she struck him a heavy blow across the face, saying to him "If I ever catch you making another figure anywhere I'll cut off your right arm." Naturally Douglas and also her son Willie were much surprised as each thought what had been done was quite an achievement. She then called Mariah, the cook to bring a rope and tying the two of them to the old colonial post on the front porch, she took a chair and sat between the two, whipping them on their naked backs for such a time, that for two weeks their clothes stuck to their backs on the lacerated flesh.

To ease the soreness, Willie would steal grease from the house and together they would slip into the barn and grease each other's backs.

As to plantation life, Dorsey said that the slaves lived in quarters especially built for them on the plantation. They could leave for the fields at "sun up" and remain until "sundown," stopping only for a meal which they took along with them.

Instead of having an overseer they had what was called



Slave Interview
James Johnson
South Jacksonville, Florida

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a "driver" by the name of January. His duties were to get the slaves together in the morning and see that they went to the fields and assigned them to their tasks. He worked as the other slaves, though, he had more privileges. He would stop work at any time he pleased and go around to inspect the work of the others, and thus rest himself. Most of the orders from the master were issued to him. The crops consisted of cotton, corn, cane and peas, which was raised in abundance.

When the slaves left the fields, they returned to their cabins and after preparing and eating of their evening meal they gathered around a cabin to sing and some songs seasoned with African melody. Then to the tune of an old fiddle they danced a dance called the "Green Corn Dance" and "Out the Pigeon Wing." Sometimes the young men on the plantation would slip away to visit a girl on another plantation. If they were caught by the "Patrols" while on these visits they would be lashed on the bare backs as a penalty for this offense.

A whipping post was used for this purpose. As soon as one slave was whipped, he was given the whip to whip his brother slave. Very often the lashes would bring blood very soon from the already lacerated skin, but this did not stop the lashing until one had received their due number of lashes.

Occasionally the slaves were ordered to church to hear



Slave Interview
James Johnson
South Jacksonville, Florida

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FPC

a white minister, they were seated in the front pews of the master's church, while the whites sat in the rear. The minister's admonition to them to honor their masters and mistresses, and to have no other God but them, as "we cannot worship other God, but you can see your master and mistress." After the services the driver's wife who could read and write a little would tell them that what the minister said "was all lies."

Douglass says that he will never forget when he was a lad 14 years of age, when one evening he was told to go and tell the driver to have all the slaves come up to the house; soon the entire host of about 80 slaves were gathered there all sitting around on stumps, some standing. The colonel's son was visibly moved as he told them they were free. Saying they could go anywhere they wanted to for he had no more to do with them, or that they could remain with him and have half of what was raised on the plantation.

The slaves were happy at this news, as they had hardly been aware that there had been a war going on. None of them accepted the offer of the colonel to remain, as they were only too glad to leave the cruelties of the Hatair plantation.

Dorsey's father got a job with Judge Garaway of Sumner where he worked for one year. He later homesteaded 40 acres of land that he received from the government and began farming.



Slave Interview
James Johnson
South Jacksonville, Florida

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FEC

Dorsey's father died in Suwannee County, Florida when Douglas was a young man and then he and his mother moved to Arlington, Florida. His mother died several years ago at a ripe old age.

Douglas Dorsey, aged but with a clear mind lives with his daughter in Spring Glen.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
South Jacksonville, Florida

James Johnson
Field worker
Complete

Slave Interview
January 11, 1937

REFERENCE

- I. interview with Douglas Dorsey, living on Spring Glen
Road, South Jacksonville, Florida



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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Guide, (Tampa Tribune, 1936)
Lake City, Florida

James Johnson
Field Notes
Complete

Miss Interview
November 8, 1936

Florida Amusement Wilson

In 1837 on the plantation of Ben Doster in Lake City, Calhoun County, Florida, was born a boy, Charles Amusement Wilson, of slave parents. His mother was very kind to his children, and she said he was born a white. His wife Mary Ann Doster, a southerner was the direct ancestor, she was very kind. Charles was eight years old when emancipated.

The Doster plantation was quite a large place, covered 100 or more acres. There were about 100 slaves, including children. They had a large open race square built of logs which was quite insignificant in comparison with the isolated master's mansion. The slaves would work early each morning, being summoned by a "driver" who was a white man, and by "run-up" would go at their respective places in the fields. All day they worked, standing at home to get a little to eat which they carried on the fence trees made outside.

At "run-up" they would get back and return to their cabins, prepare their meals and sleep from which to arise, finally getting to sleep the dawn of a new day which signified a return



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Lake City, Florida

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ETC

to their routine duties. At sundown they would gather at a poorly constructed frame building which was known as the "meeting place." In this building they would give praise and thanks to their God. The rest of the day was spent in relaxation and it is now the only day of the week in which they were not forced to work.

Glenn Augusta worked in the fields, his sister and sister worked in the Baxter kitchen. Their duties were general house work, cooking and sewing. His mother was very religious toward her slaves and constantly harassed the "Missus" about letting her rest in the fields with her husband until finally she was permitted to make the change from the house to the fields to be near her son.

The "Missus" thought Glenn's sister to be good in the present day work of her father's domesticity but was unable to do much sewing.

The mansion was furnished with the best furniture of the time, but the slaves quarters had only the cheapest and poorest furniture. His mother had no stove but cooked in the fire place using a skillet and spider (skillet, a small metal vessel with handle used for cooking; spider, a kind of frying pan). His mother's Simplified Dictionary, 1831. The cooking was not done directly on the hearth in the fire place but placed on the hearth and not



1900

The only means of obtaining water was from an open well. No ice was used. The first ice that Claude ever saw in his regular farm was in Jacksonville after Emancipation. This ice was naturally frozen and shipped from the north to be sold. It was called lake ice.



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Lake City, Florida

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FIC

Tanning and curing pig and cow hides was done, but
Clark never saw the process performed while slavery. Claude
had no special duties as the plantation or household of his master.
After cotton was picked from the fields the seeds were picked out
by hand, the cotton was then ginned for further use. The cotton
seed was used as fertilizer. In making cotton bales there was
used as the sides. The rope used was made from taking hickory
or oak wood and turning it to rope. The ropes were placed in a
tub and water poured over them. It was left to rot. After
that for a certain time the water from the tub was poured into
a pot containing honey. It was boiled for a certain time and then
left to cool. The result was a pot full of soft substance varying in
color from white to yellow, this was called lye soap. It was then
set into bars as desired for use.

For dyeing thread and cloth, red oak bark, sweet
gum bark and other such roots were boiled in water. The wash tubs
were large wooden tubs having one handle with holes in it for the
fingers. Chickens and geese feathers were always carefully saved
to make feather pillows. Claude remembers when women wore hoop
skirts. He was about 10 years of age when women wore hoop
skirts. During slavery the only dress worn was
on the back, it was after the war that he saw his first spring bed,
and at that time the first buggy. This buggy was driven by



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Lana City, Florida

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FIC

except that they would give them half of what was raised. Some of the slaves remained but all were anxious to see what freedom was like.

Johnson recalls that a six mile team drove up to the house driven by a colored Union soldier. He talked with the household members from that time until the wagon. The family then got in some in the wagon with the driver and others in back of the wagon with the furniture. Then the driver called off to him to "hurry" either was was sitting on the seat with him, "Does you know you is free now?" "Oh yes," he answered, "I been paying for this a long time." "Then an Ann let go," he answered, and drove off. They passed through Ocala, then Jacksonville, then Gainesville and finally Baldwin. It was raining and they were about 10 miles from their destination, Jacksonville, but they drove on. They reached Jacksonville and were taken to a house that stood on Liberty Street, near Jones. White people had been living there but had left before the purchase was made. There they unloaded and were told that this would be their new home. The town was full of colored soldiers all armed with revolvers. Bands and songs could be heard coming and blowing every morning and evening. The colored soldiers seemed to rule the town. When slaves were brought in and there they were given food by the Government which consisted of hard tack (bread which is uncooked and extremely hard which had to be soaked in water before eating.) The meat was given in "salted beef."



Sioux Interview
James Johnson
Lake City, Florida

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FBI

This looked and tasted somewhat like corned beef. After being in Jacksonville a short while Claude began to peddle - they began and ended in a little market, selling most of the wares to the colored soldiers.

His father had employment with a railroad company in Jacksonville, known as the Florida Central Railway and received \$24 a day, which was considered very good pay. His mother had a job with a family in Lake City at a salary of eight dollars a month. They were then considering getting a new place. They remained in the house until the Government placed them about a year, then his father bought a piece of land in Lake City and built a house of stave & boards. There they resided until his death.

By this time many of the white people began to return to their homes which had been abandoned and in which slaves found shelter. In many instances the whites had to make money at other occupations in order to get their homes back. It was said that colored people had taken possession of all of the stores with a purchase of the Army, located in Lake City, by James Ashby and Charles Stewart. Claude pointed out all this was when Jacksonville was a mere village, with only two stores in what was considered as downtown. The principal stores were: Pigg (now Hahn), Barker and Foreyth. The Indian stores were Wilson's and Clark's. These stores handled groceries, dry goods and whisky.



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Lake City, Florida

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As a means of transportation two-wheeled carts were used, mule or horse drawn carts which was in use later were not operating at that time. To cross the Saint Johns River one had to go in a row boat, which was the only ferry and was operated by the ex-governor Reid of Florida. It docked on the north side of the river at the foot of Owen Street, and on the south side at the foot of old King Road. It ran between these two points, carrying passengers to and fro.

The leading white families living in Jacksonville at that time were the Burtridges, Burdicks, Doughtys, Bryans and L'Hermines.

Charles Albert Wilson, a man about in years now lived to see many changes take place among his people since the Emancipation which he is proud of. A powerful old gentleman he is, still alert mentally and physically despite his 73 years. He recalled his childhood better than his age.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Mingo Wilson's Unit)
Lake City, Florida

James Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
November 6, 1936

REFERENCE

- I. Personal interview with Charles Andrew Wilson,
Burlington, Florida



FEDERAL WRITING PROJECT
American Guide, (George White's 1840)
Lake City, Florida

Pauli Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

1,021 Words
6 Pages

Slave Interview
January 14, 1937

Rebecca Hooks

Rebecca Hooks, age 30 years, is one of the few among
the first thinking ranks of ex-slaves who can give a clear picture
of life "before" as well.

She was born in Jones County, Georgia of Martha and
Piney Low, who were slaves of William Low. The mother was
the daughter of William Low and a slave woman who was
half Cherokee. The father was also a militee, purchased from a
slave plantation.

Members of this blood relation Rebecca's parents were
known as "house slaves," and lived in quarters located in the rear
of the "big house." A "house slave" was a servant whose duties con-
sisted of slaves around the big house, such as butler, maid, cook,
dishwasher, washer and person attendant to the man who owned the

These slaves were often held in high esteem by their masters
and of course their work better than the other slaves on the planta-
tion. Quite often they were militees as in the case of Rebecca's
parents. There seemed to be a general belief among slave owners that
militees could not stand in such laborious work as pure blooded Negro



Slave Interview
Patri Randolph
Lake City, Florida

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FEC

slaves. This accounts probably for the fact that the majority of ex-slaves now alive are ex-slaves.

The Lewises were originally of Virginia and did not own as much property in Georgia as they had in Virginia. Rebecca estimates the number of slaves on this plantation as numbering no more than 25.

They were treated kindly and cruelly by turns, according to the whim of a master and mistress who were never too stable in their dispositions. There was no "driver" or overseer on this plantation, as "Old Tom was devil enough himself when he wanted to be," observes Rebecca. While she never felt the full force of his cruelties, she often felt sorry for the other slaves who were given a task too heavy to be completed in the given time; this deliberately, so that the master might have some excuse to vent his pent-up feelings. Punishment was always in the form of a severe whipping or revocation of a slave's privilege, such as visiting other plantations etc.

The Lewises were not wealthy and it was necessary for them to raise and manufacture as many things on the plantation as possible. Slaves toiled from early morning until night in the corn, cotton, sugar cane and tobacco fields. Others tended the large herds of cattle from which milk, butter, meat and leather was produced. The leather was tanned and made into crude shoes for the slaves for the short winter months. No one wore shoes except during cold



Slave Interview
Pearl Hannah
Lake City, Florida

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FPC

mother and on Sundays. Fruit orchards and vegetables were also grown, but not given as much attention as the cotton and corn, as these were the main money crops.

As a child Rebecca learned to use the ways of her mistress. At first this was considered very amusing. Whenever she had not fulfilled her required number of picks during the week, she simply informed them that she had not done it because she had not wanted to- because she was not a "nigger." This disobedience accompanied by hysterical tantrums continued to cause Rebecca to receive many stiff punishments that might have been avoided. Her mother had given orders that no one was ever to whip her, so domestic methods were employed to punish her, such as searching her down the road with hands tied behind her back, or locking her in a dark room for several hours with only bread and water.

Rebecca resembled very much a daughter of William Lowe. The girl was really her aunt, and very conscious of the resemblance. Both had brown eyes and long dark hair. They were about the same height and the clothes of the young mistress fitted Rebecca "like a glove." To affect this likeness, Rebecca's hair was always cut very short. Finally Rebecca rebelled at having her hair all cut off and blackly refused to submit to the treatment any longer. After this happening, the girls formed a dislike for each other, and Rebecca was guilty of doing every mean act of which she was capable to torment the white girl. Rebecca's mother also scolded her in



Slave Interview
Pearl Bucklight
Lake City, Florida

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PFC

this, often telling her things to do. Harriet did not lack the fear of punishment administered her and she had the anxiety to keep "on the good side of the master" who had a fondness for her "because she was so much like the owner." The mistress' demand that she be sold or beaten was always turned aside with "Dear, you know the child can't help it; its that cursed Charcoal blood in her."

There seemed to be no very strong opposition to a slave's learning to read and write on the plantation, so Harriet learned along with the white children. Her father purchased books for her with money he was allowed to earn from the sale of corn whiskey which he made, or from work done on some other plantation during his time off. He was not permitted to buy his freedom, however.

On Sundays Harriet attended church along with the other slaves. Services were held in the white churches after their services were over. They were taught to obey their masters and work hard, and that they should be very thankful for the institution of slavery which brought them from darkest Africa.

On the plantation, the doctor was not nearly as popular as the "quack" or midwife, who treated everyone for every ailment. This plantation had its own "quack" who also served the mistress during confinement. Some of her remedies followed:

For colic: Hardened tea, pinches tea, lightened drinkings



Slave Interview
Faulkner
Lake City, Florida

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FCS

an sugar. For fever: A tea made of pomegranate seeds and crushed mint. For sleeping sickness: A tea made of sheep shrub (sarsaparilla); catnip tea. For cancer: garlic, inserted a pungent ointment to the skin of the patient having the fit.

Shortly before the war, Faulkner was married to a woman, Mrs. H. H. Faulkner. This ceremony consisted of simply joining over a piece of having been and read a few words from a book, which may or may not have been the Bible. After the war, many couples were separated because of this irregularity.

Before the outbreak of the war, Faulkner was a well-known man in the South. He had collected this information to other slaves who would read and write. He read the small newspaper that he had received at irregular intervals. The war came at a time when he was to fight with the Confederate soldiers (one never returned) and everywhere was full the tension caused by wild speculation as to the outcome of the war.

Certain conditions were very scarce before the war. There was no milk, except that secured by "stealing the milk," and this was very expensive. The milkhouse floors were carefully swept for any morsel of milk that might be gotten. But had to be composed from one enter and this was a slow process.

There were no disorders in that section as far as the



Slave Detention
Pearl Herndon
Lake City, Florida

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FRC

somehow, but was afraid that the slaves were kept on the
large plantation a long time after they had been freed. It was
only when I was over that Union soldiers were patrolling the
countryside for such offenders, that they were hastily told of
their freedom. Their former master predicted that they would
fare much worse in freedom and as many of them were afraid to
venture into the world for themselves, remaining in slavery
for many years afterward.

William and her husband were among those who left the
plantation. They were employed on various plantations until they
came to Florida, which is more than fifty years ago. William's in-
fant died several years ago and she now lives with her daughters,
and was very proud of her.



STANDARD WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
LANS CITY, Florida

Federal Bureau
Field Office
Tampa

Slave Interview
January 14, 1937

REFERENCE

Person interviewed with Federal Bureau, 1400 North 1st Street,
Tampa, Lans City, Florida.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Writers, (Federal Writers' Unit)
Live Oak, Florida

Alfred F. Foyall
Field Worker
Complete
969 Words
5 Pages

Slave Interview
August 11, 1933
John A. Foyall
Editor

Dallas Hall was born in Wilkes, Florida, a little town in Jefferson County, on February 12, 1832, the son of Alfred and Tina Hall. The Halls were the slaves of Thomas Lorton, owner of seventy-five or more slaves, some the parents of twenty-one children. The Halls, who were born before slavery worked on the large plantation of Lorton which was devoted primarily to the growing of cotton and corn and occasionally to the growing of tobacco and sugarcane. Lorton was very good to his slaves and never whipped them unless it was absolutely necessary- which was seldom! He provided them with plenty of food and clothing, and always saw to it that their cabins were livable. He was careful, however, to see that they received no educational training, but did not interfere with their religious sect. The slaves were permitted to attend church with their masters to hear the white preacher, and occasionally the master- especially un-believable to the slaves- would have an itinerant colored minister preach to the slaves.



Slave Interview
Alfred Farrell
Live Oak, Florida

Page 2
FEC

instructing them to obey their master and mistress at all times. Although freedom came to the slaves in January, Master Lenton kept them until May in order to help him with his crops. When actual freedom was granted to the slaves, only a few of the young ones left the Lenton plantation. In 1883 Golden Hall came to Live Oak where he has resided ever since. He married but his wife is now dead, and to that union one child was born.

Charlotte Martin

Charlotte Mitchell Martin, one of twenty children born to Shepherd and Lucinda Mitchell, eighty-two years ago, was a slave of Judge Wilkerson on a large plantation in States, Florida, a little town near Moulton. Shepherd Mitchell was a wagoner who hauled whiskey from Newport News, Virginia for his owner. Wilkerson was very cruel and held them in constant fear of him. He would not permit them to hold religious meetings or any other kind of meetings, but they frequently met in secret to conduct religious services. When they were caught, the "instigators"- known or suspected- were severely flogged. Charlotte recalls how her oldest brother was whipped to death for taking part in one of the religious ceremonies. This cruel act halted the secret religious services.



Slave Interview
Alfred Furroll
Live Oak, Florida

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FEC

Wilkerson found it very profitable to raise and sell slaves. He selected the strongest and best male and female slaves and mated them exclusively for breeding. The healthiest babies were given the best of attention in order that they might grow into sturdy youths, for it was these who brought the highest prices at the slave markets. Sometimes the master himself had sexual relations with his female slaves, for the products of miscegenation were very remunerative. These offsprings were in demand as house servants.

After slavery the Mitchells began to separate. A few of the children remained with their parents and eked out their living from the soil. During this period Charlotte began to attract attention with her herb cures. Doctors sought her out when they were stumped by difficult cases. She came to Live Oak to care for an old colored woman and upon whose death she was given the woman's house and property. For many years she has resided in the old shack, farming, making quilts, and practicing her herb doctoring. She has outlived her husband for whom she bore two children. Her daughter is feeble-minded- her herb remedies can't cure her!



Page 4
FEB

Born in Barton County, Missouri nearly
eighty years ago, Sarah is the daughter of Harriet Moore
and William Hamilton, her white owner. Hamilton was a very
arrogant man and frequently beat Sarah's mother because she would
not have sexual relations with the overmaster, a colored man by
the name of Ben-Hill. Sarah relates that the slaves did not
surrender, but were forced- in every sense against their will- to
live together as man and wife. It was not until after slavery
that they learned about the holy bonds of matrimony, and many
of them actually married.

Cotton, corn, and sugar were the chief products grown on the Dominican plantations. Cattle also was raised, and from this product coffee was made. The slaves began with the sun to begin their tasks in the fields and worked until dark. They were beaten by the overseer if they dared to rest themselves. No kind of punishment was too cruel or severe to be inflicted upon these woe in bondage. Frequently the thighs of the male slaves were cracked with a raw and salt put in the wound as a means of punishment for some misdemeanor. The female slaves often had their hair cut off, ~~and had to be punished~~ and had to be punished. If a female slave



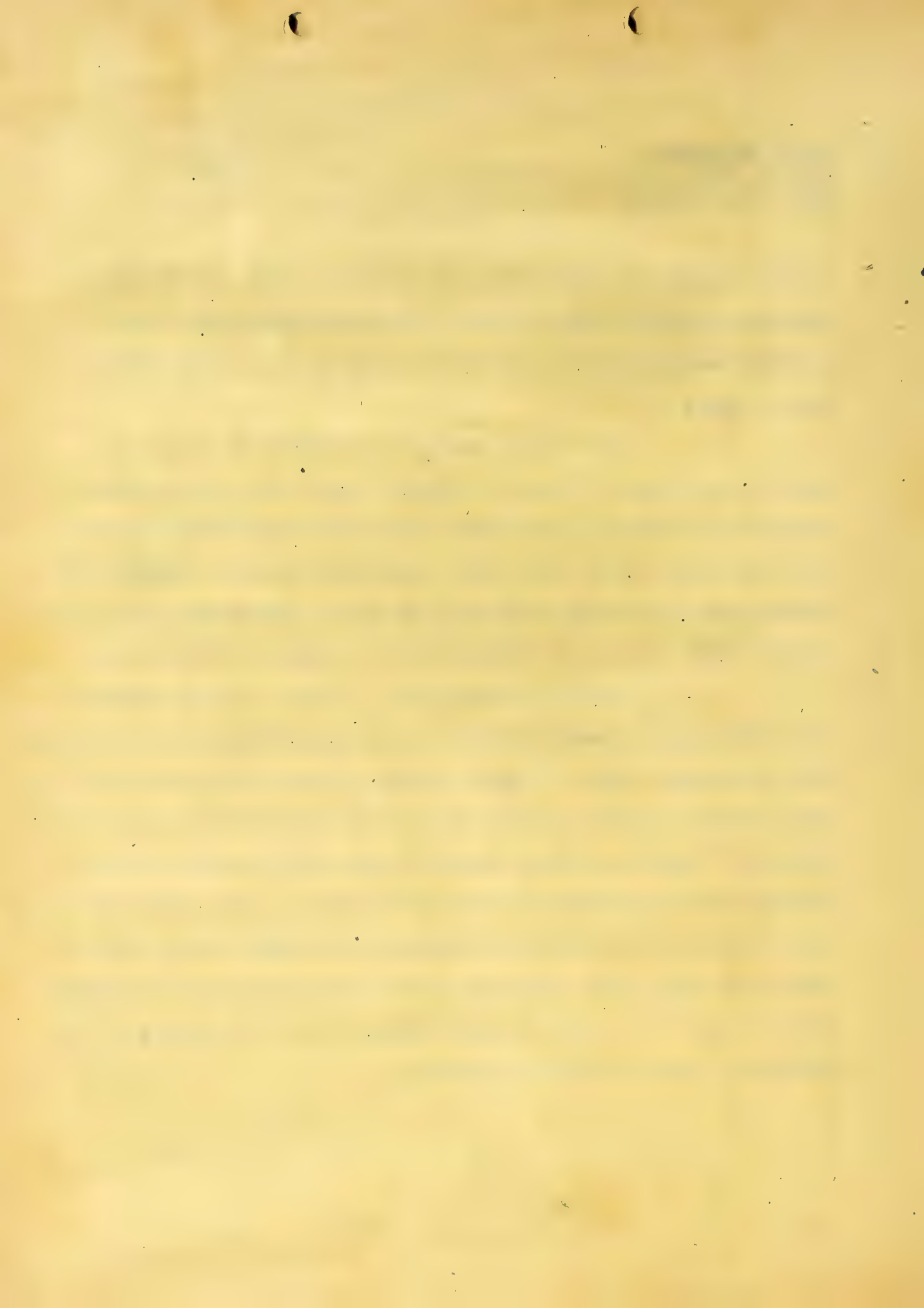
Slave Interview
Alfred Parrill
Live Oak, Florida

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whipped about the shoulders, not so much in pity as for the protection of the unborn child. Donaldson's wife committed suicide because of the cruelty not only to the slaves but to her as well.

The slaves were not permitted to hold any sort of meeting, not even to worship God. Their work consumed so much of their time that they had little opportunity to congregate. They had to wash their clothes on Sunday, the only day which they could call their own. On Sunday afternoon some of the slaves were sent for to entertain the family and its guests.

Sarah remembers the coming of the Yankees and the destruction wrought by their appearance. The soldiers stripped the plantation owners of their waste, vegetables, poultry and the like. Many plantation owners took their own lives in desperation. Donaldson kept his slaves several months after liberation and defied them to mention freedom to him. When he did give them freedom, they lost no time in leaving his plantation which held for them only unpleasant memories. Sarah came to Florida thirty-five years ago. She has been married twice, and is the mother of ten children, eight of whom are living.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Live Oak, Florida

Alfred P. Farrell
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
August 20, 1938
John A. Sims
Editor

REFERENCE

1. Personal interview with Bolden Hall, living near the Masonic Hall, in the Eastern section of Live Oak, Florida
2. Personal interview with Charlotte Martin, living near Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in the Eastern section of Live Oak, Florida
3. Sarah Ross, living near Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Live Oak, Florida



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
American Guide, (Phone Yellow 4-2114)
Tallahassee, Florida

Paul F. ...
Field ...
C...

Interview
November 14, 1936

1,310 Words
5 Pages

American

Mrs. McGary was sitting on her bench dreaming away
to herself and looking so gently that one might easily have
thought the wind was whispering her story. Her eyes were closed,
her hands lazily clasped and her feet were slowly rocking
on her lap.

She listened quietly to the interviewer's request for some of the "other ladies" of her life and finally exclaimed: "Oh! why? as you look among the ladies for the rich ladies?"

There was nothing resentful in this expression; only the patient weariness of one who has been dragged through the turbulence of a postwar time which he was powerless and uninvolved into a present with which he has nothing in common. After being assured that her life story was of some interest to him she joined us and talked quite freely of the life and times as they existed in her day.

The old man told the author that his father had the
name "George" but was. She was ^{born} during the Civil War
when she was surrounded by Union soldiers invading the country
and employed as a cook. The story, for William Allen, painted



Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Madison, Florida

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PFO

a husband or wife slave and was, according to her statement, very kind to them. It was on his plantation that she was born. Amanda McCray is one of several who were born to Jacob and Mary Williams, the latter being blind since Amanda could remember.

Children on the Powell plantation had a different experience until they were about 15 years of age when they were put to light work like carrying water and food, picking seed from cotton lint (there were no cotton gins), and mending the small children. They were only schooled in all the current superstitions and listened to the tales of ghosts and witches that were told and repeated, tales common to the South today. Little boys believed to this day that howl was on the wind and that all children were like him on Christmas morning at a certain time. Children were never kept and never beaten around their work to insure they finished and had their work noted in a competition of who was best and winner if they were able about learning to walk. This was supposed to strengthen the weak limbs. It was a custom common to see a child of two or three years still crawling at the cotton's harvest. Their masters encouraged the slaves to do this, thinking it made strong bones and teeth.

At Christmas time the slave children all trembled to "see the master" and stand before him with "Christmas gifts" to their master and mistress. They were never disappointed. Gifts consisted mostly of candies, nuts and fruits but there was always some useful



Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Palmdale, Florida

Page 1
FHC

article of clothing included, something they were not accustomed
to having. One little boy received a beautiful silk dress from
his young mistress, who knew how much she liked beautiful dresses.
She was a very happy girl and loved the dress so much that she
never wore it except on some special occasion.

Annie was trained to be a house servant, learning
to cook and wash from the white mother who refused to let this
bondage affect her usefulness. She liked best to see the fine
clothes and silver of her mistress, making beautiful dresses
that required eight and ten yards of cloth and sometimes as many
as some gentlemen to change their clothes.

Some of these dresses were made of muslin that
was cheap while others were made in the new better ways. Beautiful
imported lace was used in the collars and cuffs of
the wealth.

The Powell slave had a white sister who would
serve any time he chose, so long as he did not interfere with
the work of the other slaves. He was not obliged to do hard manual
labor and went about the plantation well dressed up in a frock
coat and wore light shoes. He was more than a little conscious
of this and was held in view by the others. He often visited neighboring
plantations to help his mistress. It was from this mistress that
they first heard of the Civil War. He told white people for the
suspense of the Union soldiers, but because of the war this



Slave Interview
Percy Foreman
Dallas, Texas

Page 4
FRC

to them but for other slaves who were treated so cruelly. There was a saying around there "the gods never had a stomach for you for the cruel slaves that kept it crushed down."

Amos was an exceptionally good cook and so widespread was this knowledge that the Indian soldiers employed him as a cook in their camp for a short while. The slaves remember most of their officers and think they were no better nor worse than the others. These soldiers committed no depredations in any section except in confidence whatever they wanted in the way of food and clothing. None received anything else.

Mr. Foreman said and points to all slaves who wanted to remain with him; few left, so kind had he been to them all.

Life went on in much the same manner for Amos's family except that the children attended school every 4 weeks. A teacher instructed them from a "blue back Webster." Amos was a young man, but was managed to learn to read a little. Later they had colored teachers who followed much the same routine as the whites had. They were held in awe by the other slaves and every little girl yearned to be a teacher, so this was about the only professional field open to Negro women at that time.

"After our Harroes happened out with five
plantation (harroes) and called Harroes, and all the rest of it."

Mr. Foreman did not keep up with the politics of the



Slave Interview
Paul M. Smith
Molokai, Florida

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was not mentioned during about Jon Gibbs, member of the Florida
Locksmiths. There was much talk here of Master T. Davidson, and
they thought him a fool for trying to start a school in Athens for
Negroes. She recalls the Negro post master who served two or three
times at Molokai. She would not give his name.

There have been three widespread "panics" (dis-
astrous) during her lifetime but how. During the first this is the
worst one. During the Civil War, called was so much that all the
people and were a substance but now, she recalls, "you won't
find it the road for the bread."

Her husband and children are all dead now. She
lives with a man who is no longer young but still, it seems to
her, very old. The man came to live with her because he was
blind, and she is very poor now. She says she is now blind in
one eye and almost blind. She is now blind in the other eye
and is almost blind. She is now blind in the other eye
and is almost blind.

At present she lives on the western corner of
first and second streets. The post office address is P. M., Molokai,
Florida.



CENTRAL WITNESS PROJECT
American Guide, (Socio Workers' Unit)
Maitson, Florida

Patel Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
November 17, 1946

Interviews

1. Personal interview with Amanda McCray, First and Union Streets, Maitson, Florida



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Fiction Writers' Unit)
MADISON, FLORIDA

Pearl Randolph
Field Worker
Complete
1, 197
5 Pages

Slave Interview
November 24, 1938

Duncan Gaines

Duncan Gaines, the son of George and Martha Gaines was born on a plantation in Virginia on March 15, 1850. He was one of four children, all fourteen of whom he grew up with their parents until maturity. They were sold many times, but Duncan Gaines best remembers the master who was known as "old man Brever."

On this plantation were about 20 slaves, who toiled all day in the cotton and tobacco fields and came home at dusk to cook their meals of corn pone, collards and sweet potatoes on the hearth of their one room cabins. Dinners were baked in special ovens by placing the food atop the iron tops of large heated frying pans called spiders, and the potatoes were roasted in the ashes, likewise the corn pone. Their masters being more or less kind, there was pork, chicken, eggs and other foodstuffs that they were allowed to raise as their own on a small scale. This work was often done by the light of a torch at night as they had little time of their own. In this way slaves earned money for small luxuries and the more ambitious sometimes saved enough money to buy their freedom, although this was not encouraged very much.



Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Madison, Florida

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The early life of Duncan was carefree and happy. With the exception of carrying water to the laborers and running errands, he had little to do. Most of the time of the slave children was spent in playing ball and wrestling and foraging the woods for berries and fruits and playing games as other children. They were often joined in their play by the master's children, who taught them to read and write and fired Duncan with the ambition to be free, so that he would "wear a frill on his collar and own a pair of shoes that did not have brass caps on the toes" and require the application of fat to make them shine.

Wearing his shoes shined as examined slave and a coarse homespun suit dyed with oak bark, indigo or poke berries, he went to church on Sunday afternoons after the whites had had their services and listened to sermons delivered by white ministers who taught abhorrence to their masters. After the services, most of the slaves would remove their shoes and carry them in their hands, as they were accustomed to wearing shoes absent in winter..

The women were given Saturday afternoons off to launder their clothes and prepare for Sunday's services. All slaves were required to appear on Sunday morning as clean as possible with their clothing corded and heads combed.

Lye soap was used both for laundering and bathing. It was made from fragments of fat meat and ashes that were carefully saved for that purpose. Potash was brewed from oak ashes. This also



Slave Interview
Pamela McLaughlin
Tallahassee, Florida

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there was allowed to eat for a certain period of time, then washed
to a jolly-like consistency. After cooling, the soap was put into
square bars and "doled out" (allowance) to the slaves according
to the number in each family. Once Duncan was given a bar of "soap"
and his mistress for doing a particularly nice piece of work of
polishing the harness of her favorite horse and he found out that
the gift that he put it among his family slaves to make them small
event. It was the first piece of toilet soap that he had ever seen;
and it caused quite a bit of envy among the other slave children.

Duncan Gilman does not remember his grandparents
but thinks they were both living on some nearby plantation. His
father was the plantation blacksmith and Duncan liked to look on as
slaveowner, single horse, horse show, etc were turned out or dis-
posed. His mother was strong and healthy, so she worked all day in
the field. Duncan always listened for his father's return from the
field, which was marked by a dog, no matter how tired she was. She
was very fond of her children and did not share the attitude of many
slave mother who thought of their children as belonging solely to
the master. She lived in constant fear that "old man's master"
would come with some misadventure and be forced to sell them separately.
She always whispered to them about "the war" and talked to a friend
that she was to be free.



Slave Interview
Paul Randolph
Baltimore, Florida

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FRO

At that time Negro children listened to the tales of Big Bad and Bloody Bones, various animal stories and much childish stuff as:

"Little Boy, Little Boy who wash your hands

Hands and 'em out and you'll never be ill."

Children were told that white men did not go to school and were generally said to "shoot up" if they questioned their elders about such matters.

Children with long or large heads were thought to be marked to become "wise men." Everyone believed in ghosts and superstitions all the superstitions that have been handed down to the present generation. There was much talk of "blackbirds" and others all for a long time without getting rid of them. Children were told to be "fright" or "scattered" from some sin that his father had committed.

Before was 15 years of age when freedom was declared and followed the hectic times which followed. He was among the children attending schools provided by the Freedmen's Aid and other similar organizations founded by Northerners. Most of the instructors were white men sent to the South for that purpose.

The slaves were impoverished and were given a miserable life. The slaves had very little but had plenty of foodstuffs and clothing and a fairly comfortable home. All of the children received enough learning to enable them to read and write, which was regarded



Slave Interview
Pearl Hammond
Haines, Florida

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as very unusual in those days. Slaves had been taught that their
brain was inferior to the whites who owned them and for that
reason, many parents refused to send their children to school,
thinking it a waste of time and that too much learning might cause
some injury to the brain of their supposedly weak-minded child.

Of the various changes, Duncan remembers very little,
as gradual did they occur in his section. Water was secured from
the spring or well. Perishable foodstuffs were left down into the
well to keep cool. Shoes were made from leather tanned by boiling
in a solution of red oak bark and water; underwear was made of wood-
en tube, made from torreal cut in halves. Candles were made for light-
ing and were made from sheep and beef tallow. Light wood tresses were
used by slaves not able to afford candles. Stockings were knitted by
the women during cold or rainy weather. Sewing and spinning done by
special slave women who were too old to work in the fields; others
made the cloth into garments. Everything was done by hand except the
luxuries imported by the wealthy.

Duncan Miller is now a widower and first marriage failed.
He looks upon this "new fangled" age with more tolerance and feels
that the ignorance and hatred he learned with the slaves are of the
simple, old fashioned way of living things.

FEDERAL WITNESS PROJECT
American Guide, (Former Witness' Unit)
Madison, Florida

Pauli Bookish
Field Worker
Complete

Given Interview
November 24, 1968

REFERENCE

- I. Personal interview with Debrah Gilson, Second Street
near Madison Training School for Negroes, Madison, Florida



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Slave, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Madison, Florida

Pauli Randolph
Field Master
Complete

Slave Interview
January 28, 1937

787 Words
5 Pages

Willie Duke

Born in Brooks County, Georgia, 85 years ago on February 24th, Willie Duke jovially declared that he is "on the high road to living a hundred years."

He was one of 47 slaves belonging to Mrs. John Duke, who was only in moderate circumstances. His parents were Amen and Harriet Duke, both born on this plantation, in Wilkes. As they were a healthy pair they were required to work hard hours in the fields, although the master was not actually cruel to them.

On this plantation a variety of products was grown, cotton, corn, potatoes, peas, rice and sugar cane. Peanuts were thrown away and the slaves had only coarse food such as corn bread, collard greens, peas and occasionally a little rice or white bread. Even the potatoes were reserved for the white folk and "household use."

As a child Willie was required to "take water and wood, carry at milking time and run errands." His clothing consisted of only a homespun shirt that was made on the plantation. Nearly



Slave Interview
Pearl Randolph
Wilton, Florida

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PDC

everything used was grown or manufactured on the plantation. Candles were made in the big house by the cook and a bunch of slaves from the quarters, all of them being required to bring fat and tallow that had been saved for this purpose. These candles were for the use of the master and mistress, as the slaves used fat lightwood tapers for lighting purposes. Cotton was used for making clothes, and it was spun and woven into cloth by the slave women, then stored in the warehouse for future use. Dresses were made of tanned leather held together by strips made of maple wood. Lye soap was made in large pots, put into a smoke and heated from the smoke house. Potash was secured from the ashes of burnt oak wood and allowed to set in a quantity of grease that had also been saved for the purpose, then boiled into soap.

The cotton was gathered in bags of bear grass and scattered in baskets woven with strips of white oak that had been dried in the sun.

Willie remembers the time when a slave on the plantation escaped and went north to live. This was supposed to correspond with his family member, and it was whispered about that he was "living very high" and actually making money with which to buy his family. No one ever going to school. This fired all the slaves with an ambition to go north and this made them more than usually interested in the outcome of the war between the states. He was too young to fully understand the meaning of freedom but wanted very much to go away to



Slave Interview
Pearl Hammond
Madison, Florida

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FIC

some place where he could earn enough money to buy his mother a real silk dress. He confided this information to her and she was very proud of him but gave him a good spanking for fear he expressed this desire for freedom to his young master or mistress.

Prayer meetings were very frequent during the days of the war and very often the slaves were called in from the fields and summoned from their labors as they would hold these prayer meetings, always praying God for the safe return of their master.

The master did not return after the war and when the soldiers in blue came through that section the frightened women were greatly dependent upon their slaves for protection and livelihood. Many of these black men chose loyalty to their dead masters to freedom and shouldered the burden of the support of their former mistresses cheerfully.

After the war Willis' father was one of those to remain with his widowed mistress. Other members of his family left as soon as they were freed, even his wife. They thus remained attached until her death.

Willis was his first beloved when he was an infant and he still thinks a father mistress superior to the other brand variety. He recalls a humorous incident which occurred when he was a child and had been introduced for the first time to the task of picking a piece.

After demonstrating how it was done to a group of slave



Slave Interview
Pearl Buckleigh
Holliston, Florida

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FPO

children, the person in charge had gone about his way leaving them busily engaged in picking the geese. They had been told that the one gathering the most feathers would receive a piece of money. Sometime later the overseer returned to find a dozen geese that had been stripped of all the feathers. They had been told to pick only the pin feathers beneath the wings and about the bodies of the geese. Did we guess what happened to the over ambitious children?

He had heard of ice long before he looked upon it and he only thought of it as another wild experiment. Why buy ice, when watermelons and butter could be lay down into the well to keep cool?

One of Willie's happiest moments was when he earned enough money to buy his first pair of patent leather shoes. To possess a pair of store bought shoes had been his ambition since he was a child, when he had to shine the shoes of his master and those of the master's children.

He next owned a horse and buggy of which he was very proud. This increased his popularity with the girls and by and by he was married to Mary, a girl with whom he had been reared. Nobody was surprised but Mary, explained Mr. Duke. "We had everybody else know we had got married some day. We didn't jump over no fence neither. We was married like white folks and flowers and cake and everything."

Willie Duke has been in Florida for "Land down here"



Oliver Interview
Pamela Hunslick
Maitland, Florida

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large" and prefers this state to his home state. He still has a few
enemies there but has never returned since leaving so long ago.



FEDERAL BUREAU OF PROSPECT
American Child, (Negro Triloss Unit)
Madison, Florida

Paul F. Smith
Field Worker
Charlotte

Slave Interview
January 20, 1917

REFERENCE

- I. Personal Interview with William Baker, Valdosta Road
near Jewish Church, Madison, Florida



FEDERAL WRITERS BUREAU
American Guide (Negro Writers Unit)
Monticello, Florida

Alfred Farrell
Field Worker
Complete
777 Words
4 Pages

Slave Interview
January 12, 1937.

A GOVERNOR'S SLAVES

Matilda Brooks, 78, who lives in Monticello, Fla., was once a slave of a South Carolina governor.

Mrs. Brooks was born in 1857 or 1858 in Angelfield, S.C. Her parents were Hawkins and Harriet Knox, and at the time of the birth of their daughter were slaves on a large plantation belonging to Governor Frank Pickens. On this plantation were raised cotton, corn, potatoes, tobacco, peas, wheat and truck products. As soon as Matilda was large enough to go into the fields she helped her parents with the farming.

The former slave describes Governor Pickens as being 'very good' to his slaves. He supervised them personally, although official duties often made this difficult. He saw to it that their quarters were comfortable and that they always had sufficient food. When they became ill he would himself doctor on them with pills, castor oil, turpentine and other remedies. Their diet consisted largely of potatoes, corn bread, syrup, greens, peas, and occasionally ham, fowl and other meats or poultry. Their chief beverage was coffee made from parched corn.

Since there were no stoves during slavery, they cooked their foods in large iron pots suspended from racks built into the fireplaces. Fried foods were prepared in iron 'spiders', large frying pans with legs. These pans were placed over hot coals, and the seasoning was done with salt which they secured from evaporated sea-water. After the food was fried and while the coals were still glowing the fat of oxen and sheep was melted to make candles. Any grease left over was put into a large box, to be used later for soap-making.

Lye for the soap was obtained by putting oak ashes in a barrel and pouring water over them. After standing for several days -- until the ashes had decayed --- holes were drilled into the bottom of the barrell and the liquid drained off. This liquid was the lye, and it was then trickled into the pot into which the fat had been placed. The two were then boiled, and after cooling cut into squares of soap.

Water for cooking and other purposes was obtained from a well, which also served as a refrigerator at times. Matilda does not recall seeing ice until many years later.

In the evenings Matilda's mother would weave cloth on her spinning-jenny and an improvised loom. This cloth was sometimes dyed in various colors: blue from the indigo plant; yellow from the crocus and brown from the bark of the red oak. Other colors were obtained from berries and other plants.



Slave Interview
Alfred Farrell
Monticello, Fla.

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FAC

In seasons other than picking-time for the cotton the children were usually allowed to play in the evenings. When cotton crops were large, however, they spent their evenings picking out seeds from the cotton bolls, in order that their parents might work uninterruptedly in the fields during the day. The cotton, after being picked and separated, would be weighed in balances and packed tightly in 'crosus' bags.

Chicken and goose feathers were jealously saved during these days. They were used for the mattresses that rested on the beds of wooden slats that were built in corners against the walls. Hoop skirts were worn at the time, but for how long afterward Matilda does not remember. She only recalls that they were disappearing 'about the time I saw a windmill for the first time'.

The coming of the Yankee soldiers created much excitement among the slaves on the Fickens plantation. The slaves were in ignorance of activities going on, and of their approach, but when the first one was sighted the news spread 'just like dry grass burning -- a hill'. Despite the kindness of Governor Fickens the slaves were happy to claim their new-found freedom. Some of them even ran away to join the Northern armies before they were officially freed. Some attempted to show their loyalty to their old owners by joining the Southern armies, but in this section they were not per-



Slave Interview
Alfred Furrell
Monticello, Fla.

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FAC

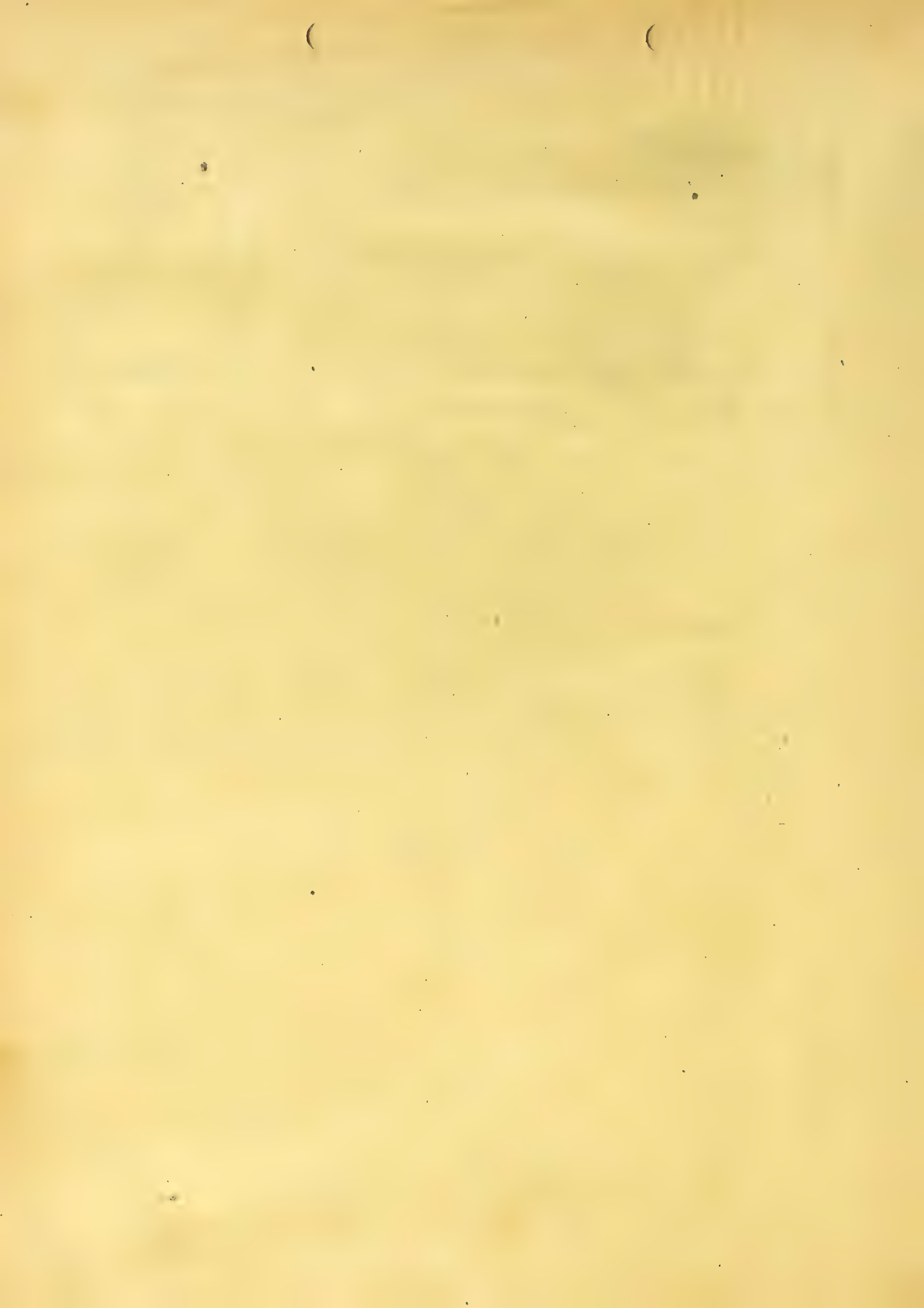
mitted to do so.

After she was released from slavery Matilda came with her parents to the Monticello section, where the Anxnes became paid house servants. The parents took an active part in politics in the section, and Matilda was sent to school.

White teachers operated the schools at first, and were later replaced by Negro teachers. Churches were opened with Negro ministers in the pulpits, and other necessities of community life eventually came to the vicinity.

Matilda still lives in one of the earlier homes of her parents in the area, now described as 'Rooster-Town' by its residents. The section is in the eastern part of Monticello.

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Slave interview
Alfred Farrell
Menticello, Fla.

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FHC

INTERVIEW

Interview with subject, Matilda Brooks; "Rooster-Town",
eastern part of city, Menticello, Jefferson County, Fla.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Union, (Negro Writers' Union)
Tallahassee, Florida

John Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 15, 1936

583 Words
3 Pages

PATIENCE CAMPBELL

Patience Campbell, blind for 25 years, was born in Jackson County, near Marianna, Florida about 1861, on a farm of George Bullock. Her mother Terry, belonged to Bullock, while her father Arnold Morris, belonged to Thomas Morris, a large plantation owner. According to Patience, her mother's owner was very kind, her father's very cruel. Bullock had very few slaves, but Morris had a great many of them, and a few of them he sold at the slave markets.

Patience spent most of her time playing in the yard when she was a child, while her parents toiled in the fields for their respective owners. Her grandparents on her mother's side belonged to Bullock, but of her father's people she knew nothing as "they didn't come to this country." When asked where they lived, she replied "in South Carolina."

While she lived with her mother, Patience lived much better than she lived with her father. Her only food consisted of corn, beans, rice, corn bread which was seasoned by molasses in the morning. Coffee was made from parched corn or meal and was the chief drink. The food was cooked in large iron pots and given to



Slave Interview
James Johnson
Maitland, Florida

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FCC

an open fireplace and seasoned with salt obtained by evaporating sea water.

Water for all purposes was drawn from a well. In order to get soap to wash with, the cook would save all the grease left from the cooking. Grease was obtained by mixing cook grease with water and allowing them to decay. Tubs were made from large barrels.

When she was about seven or eight, Patience assisted other children about her age and older in picking out cotton seeds from the picked cotton. After the cotton was weighed or measured and baled, it was bound in large bales of wool.

Spinning and weaving were taught Patience when she was about ten. Although the distaff and thread were great valuable articles, she knows only how linen was obtained by allowing the linen plant to rot in water and straining the result.

Patience's father was not only a carpenter and a cooper but also a finished shoemaker. After tanning and curing his hides by placing them in water with oak bark for several days and then exposing them to the sun to dry, he would cut out the uppers and the soles after measuring the foot to be made. There would be an inside sole as well as an outside sole tacked together by means of small tacks made of maple wood. Sewing was done on the piece by means of flax thread.

Patience remembers making the footers for all the shoes to make further beds. She doesn't remember when these shoes

Slave Interview
James Johnson
Monticello, Florida

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FIC

wearing hoops in their skirts nor when bad springs replaced
bad ropes. She does remember, however, that three whips were used.
She can not first recall about 35 years ago, ten years before
she went blind. She remembers seeing buggies during slavery time,
little light carriages, some with two wheels and some with four.
She never heard of any money called "gold-plaster," and she re-
calls many occasions during the war when Confederate currency was
introduced. When the slaves were sick, they were given master oil,
laurel-oil and medicines made from various roots and herbs.

Peterson's sister joined the confederacy, but her
father's master did not. Although freedom would result in the
Southern army if they desired, none of them wished to do so but
preferred to join northern forces and fight for the thing they de-
sired most, freedom. When freedom was no longer a dream, but a re-
ality, the Harritts started life on their own as farmers. Twelve
year old Peterson entered one of the schools established by the
Freedmen's Bureau. She recalls the gradual growth of Negro antia-
gonists, the successes and the rise and fall of the Negroes politically.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Monticello, Florida

James T. Johnson
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
December 12, 1936

REFERENCE

- I. Personal interview with Patience Campbell, 210 Cherry Street, Monticello, Florida



FEDERAL WRITING PROJECT
American Guide, (Dante Wright's Unit)
Monticello, Florida

Michael A. Austin
Field Worker
Complete
1,007 Words
5 Pages

Cleve Interview
November 10, 1938

Douglas Parish

Douglas Parish was born in Monticello, Florida, May 7, 1890, to Charles and Fannie Parish, slaves of Jim Parish. Fannie had been taught from a fairly by the name of Palmer to be a "brooder", that is a bearer of strong children who could bring high prices at the slave markets. A "brooder" always feared better than the majority of female slaves, and Fannie Parish was no exception. All she had to do was raise children. Charles Parish labored in the cotton fields, the chief product of the Parish plantation.

As a small boy Douglas used to spend his time watching the warblers, playing ball, racing and wrestling with the other boys. The warblers were made from lumps of clay hardened in the fire. He was a very good runner, and as it was a custom in those days for the plantation owner to watch his "children" against that of his neighbor, he was a favorite with Parish because he seldom failed to win the races. Parish treated the winners by having them race to the boundary of his plantation and back again. He would reward the winner with a jack-knife or a bag of apples.

Just to be first was an honor in itself, for the first



Slave Interview
Rachel A. Austin
Monticello, Florida

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PEC

set runner represented his master in the Fourth of July
races when runners from all over the county competed for top
honors, and the winner earned a bag of silver for his master.
If Parish didn't win the prize, he was told to get along with
for several days, but eventually he would accept his defeat with
resolution. Before in later times when he had a pair
of fighting cocks to a slave, he would show the excitement of
the betting.

Douglas' first job was picking cotton seed
from the cotton. When he was about 12 years of age, he became
the stable boy, and soon learned about the care and grooming of
horses from an old slave who had charge of the Parish stable.
He was also required to keep the horses, carriage, and spring-
wagon clean. The horses were light bay-colored and were
very fast. The carriage was covered four-wheeled carriage, with
at the sides, but having curtains that may be rolled down. He liked
this job very much because it gave him an opportunity to ride on the
horses, and make of all the boys on the plantation. They had to
be content with chopping wood, running errands, cleaning up the
plantation, and other work. Besides of his work as stable boy,
Douglas was required to travel to the market with his horse and
other slaves for the purpose of securing salt for the water.
It was cheaper to secure salt by this method than it was to purchase
it otherwise.



Life in slavery was not all bad, according to Douglas Parish. Parish fed his slaves well, gave them comfortable quarters in which to live, looked after them when they were sick, and worked them very moderately. The food was cooked in the fireplace in large iron pots, pans and ovens. The slaves had greens, potatoes, corn, rice, meat, beans, and corn bread to eat. Occasionally the corn bread was replaced by flume bread. The slaves drank an imitation coffee made from parched corn or meal. There was no ice to preserve the left-over food, only enough for each meal was prepared.

Parish seldom punished his slaves, and never did he permit his overseer to do so. If the slaves failed to do their work, they were reported to him. He would warn them and show his black whip which was usually sufficient. He had seen overseers beat slaves to death, and he did not want to risk losing the money he had invested in his. After his death, his son managed the plantation in much the same manner as his father.

But the war was destined to take the Parishes from all their slaves by giving them their freedom. Even though they were free to go, many of the slaves elected to remain with their mistress who had always been kind to them. The war swept away much of the money which her husband had left her; and although she would like to have kept all of her slaves, she found it impossible



Slave Interview
Rachel A. Austin
Menticello, Florida

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Fid

to do so. She allowed the good old slaves to remain on the plantation and kept a few of the younger ones to work about the plantation. Douglas and his parents were among those who remained on the plantation. His father was a skilled wheel-wright and carpenter, and he was employed to make furniture to the property. His mother cooked for the Parishes.

Many of the Negroes migrated north, and they went back stories of the "new country" where "the white folks let you do as you please." These stories influenced a great number of other Negroes to go North and never life more as servants, soldiers, laborers and cooks. The Negroes who remained in the South were forced to make their own living. At the end of the war, food and commodities had gone up to prices that were impossible for the Negro to pay. Ham, for example, cost 40¢ and 50¢ a pound; corn was 25¢; cotton was two dollars a bushel.

Douglas' father taught him all that he knew about carpentry and wheel-wrighting, and the two were in demand in rural, rural, or small towns for the white people. Although he never attended school, Charles Parish could calculate very rapidly the number of bricks that it would take to build a house. After the establishment of schools by the Freedmen's Bureau, Douglas' father made him go, but he did not like the confinement of school and soon dropped out. The teachers for the most part were white, and were concerned only with teaching the ex-slaves spelling, writing, and



Slave Interview
School A. Austin
Mentisville, Florida

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arithmetic. The few colored teachers went into the community in an effort to elevate the standards of living. They went into the churches where they were certain to reach the greatest number of people and spoke to the of their mission. The Negro teachers were generally received by the community and were glad to welcome some "Yankee teachers" into their midst.

Whereas the white teachers did not bother with the Negroes except in the classroom, other white men came who showed a decided interest in them. They were called "missionaries" because of the type of traveling bag which they usually carried, and this term later became synonymous with "political missionaries." These men sought to advance their political schemes by getting the Negroes to vote for certain men who would be favorable to them. The thought the Negroes voted as put a heavy burden on the missionaries to obtain the goodwill of the colored people. They used the ignorant colored minister to further their plans, and he was their willing tool. The Negro's mission was of the highest degree the South Father and further into debt and he would like the South was compelled to restrict his privileges.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Monticello, Florida

Rachel A. Austin
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
November 10, 1936

REFERENCE

- I. Personal interview with Douglas Parish, Monticello
Florida

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Black Writers' Unit)
Gainesville, Florida

Pauli Bonaparte
Field Worker
Complete
1,139 Words
6 Pages

Slave Interview
October 8, 1936
John A. Simms
Editor

Sam and Louisa Everett.

Sam and Louisa Everett, 84 and 80 years of age respectively, have weathered together some of the worst experiences of slavery, and as they look back over the years, can relate these experiences as clearly as if they had happened only yesterday.

Both were born near Warfield, Virginia and were as slaves several times on nearby plantations. It was on the plantation of "Big Jim" McCain that they met as slave-children and departed after Emancipation to live the lives of free people.

Sam was the son of Peter and Betsy Everett, field hands who spent long back-breaking hours in the cotton fields and came home at nightfall to cultivate their small garden. They lived in constant fear that their master would confiscate most of their vegetables; he so often did.

Louisa remembers little about her parents and thinks that she was sold at an early age to a separate master. Her name



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as nearly as she could remember was Norfolk Virginia. Everyone called her "Nor." It was not until after she was freed and had sent her children to school that she changed her name to Louisa.

Sam and Norfolk spent part of their childhood on the plantation of "Big Jim" who was very cruel; often he would whip his slaves into insensibility for minor offenses. He sometimes hung them up by their thumbs whenever they were caught attempting to escape—"er fer no reason at all."

On this plantation were more than 100 slaves who were rated indiscriminately and without any regard for family unions. If their master thought that a certain man and woman might have strong, healthy offspring, he forced them to have sexual relation, even ^{though} they were married to other slaves. If there seemed to be any slight reluctance on the part of either of the unfortunate ones "Big Jim" would make them consummate this relationship in his presence. He used the same procedure if he thought a certain couple was not producing children fast enough. He enjoyed these orgies very much and often entertained his friends in this manner; quite often he and his guests would engage in these debaucheries, choosing for themselves the prettiest of the young women. Sometimes they forced the unhappy husbands and lovers of their victims to look on.

Louisa and Sam were married in a very revolting manner. To quote the woman:



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"Marse Jim called me and Sam ter him and ordered Sam to pull off his shirt- that was all the McClain niggers wore- and he said to me: Now, 'do you think you can stand this big nigger?' He had that old bull whip flung acrost his shoulder, and Lawd, that man could hit so hard! So I jes said 'yessur, I guess so,' and tried to hide my face so I couldn't see Sam's nakedness, but he made me look at him anyhow."

"Well he told us what we must git ready and do in his presence, and we had to do it. After that we were considered man and wife. He and Sam was a healthy pair and had fine, big babies, so I never had another man forced on me, thank God. Sam was kind to me and I learnt to love him."

Life on the McClain plantation was a steady grind of work from morning until night. Slaves had to rise in the dark of the morning at the ringing of the "Big House" bell. After eating a hasty breakfast of fried fat pork and corn pone, they worked in the fields until the bell rang again at noon; at which time they ate boiled vegetables, roasted sweet potatoes and black molasses. This food was cooked in iron pots which had legs attached to their bottoms in order to keep them from resting directly on the fire. These utensils were either hung over a fire or set atop a mound of hot coals. Biscuits were a luxury but wherever they had white bread it was cooked in another thick pan called a "spider."



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This pan had a top which was covered with hot coals to insure the browning of the bread on top.

Slave women had no time for their children. These were cared for by an old woman who called them twice a day and fed them "pot likker" (vegetable broth) and skimmed milk. Each child was provided with a wooden laddle which he dipped into a wooden trough and fed himself. The older children fed those who were too young to hold a laddle.

So exacting was "Big Jis" that slaves were forced to work even when sick. Expectant mothers toiled in the fields until they felt their labor pains. It was not uncommon for babies to be born in the fields.

There was little time for play on the plantation. Even the very small children were assigned tasks. They hunted hen's eggs, gathered poke berries for dyeing, shelled corn and drove the cows home in the evening. Little girls knitted stockings.

There was no church on this plantation and itinerant ministers avoided going there because of the owner's cruelty. Very seldom were the slaves allowed to attend neighboring churches and still rarer were the opportunities to hold meetings among themselves. Often when they were in the middle of a song or prayer they would be forced to halt and run to the "Big House". Woe to any slave who ignored



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the ringing of the bell that summoned him to work and told him when he might "knock off" from his labors.

Louisa and Sam last heard the ringing of this bell in the fall of 1865. All the slaves gathered in front of the "Big House" to be told that they were free for the time being. They had heard whisperings of the War but did not understand the meaning of it all. Now "Big Jim" stood weeping on the piazza and cursing the fate that had been so cruel to him by robbing him of all his "niggers." He inquired if any wanted to remain until all the crops were harvested and when no one consented to do so, he flew into a rage; seizing his pistol, he began firing into the crowd of frightened Negroes. Some were killed outright and others were maimed for life. Finally he was prevailed upon to stop. He then attempted to take his own life. A few frightened slaves promised to remain with him another year; this placated him. It was necessary for Union soldiers to make another visit to the plantation before "Big Jim" would allow his former slaves to depart.

Sam and Louisa moved to Boston, Georgia where they sharecropped for several years; they later bought a small farm when their two sons became old enough to help. They continued to live on this homestead until a few years ago, when their advancing ages made it necessary that they live with the children. Both of the children had settled in Florida several years previous and



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wanted their parents to come to them. They now live in Mulberry, Florida with the younger son. Both are pitifully infirm but can still remember the horrors they experienced under very cruel owners. It was with difficulty that they were prevailed upon to relate some of the gruesome details recorded here.



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Mulberry, Florida

Pearl Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

Slave Interview
October 8, 1936
John A. Sims
Editor

REFERENCES

- I. Personal interview with Sam and Louise Everett,
P.O. Box 238 & E.P.J. Everett, Mulberry, Florida



FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Gulbary, Florida

Pearl Randolph
Field Worker
Complete

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October 8, 1936
John A. Simms
Editor

Everett, Sam and Louise

Sam and Louise Everett, 35 and 30 years of age respectively, have weathered together some of the worst experiences of slavery, and as they look back over the years, can relate these experiences as clearly as if they had happened only yesterday.

Both were born near Norfolk, Virginia and sold as slaves several times on nearby plantations. It was on the plantation of "Big Jim" McCain that they met as slave-children and departed after Emancipation to live the lives of free people.

Sam was the son of Peter and Betty Everett, field hands who spent long back-breaking hours in the cotton fields and came home at nightfall to cultivate their small garden. They lived in constant fear that their master would confiscate most of their vegetables ~~as~~ he so often did.

Louise remembers little about her parents and knows that she was sold at an early age to a separate master.



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Pearl Sound
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hundreds and lovers of their virtues to look on.

Benjamin and Sam were married in a very swelling manner. To quote the woman:

"Hereas Jim called me and Sam for him and ordered Sam to pull off his shirt- that was all the McClain's slaves were- and he said to me: 'Sam, do you think you can stand this big fellow?' He had that old bull whip flung across his shoulders, and Lord that man would hit so hard! So I just said 'Yes, I can stand it,' and tried to hide my face so I wouldn't see Sam's nakedness, but he made me look at him anyhow."

"Well he told ^{us} that we must get away and be in his presence, and we had to do it. After that we were considered one and wife. He and Sam was a lovely pair and had fine, big babies, so I never had another one forced on me, thank God. Sam was kind to me and I learnt to love him."

Life on the McClain plantation was a steady round of work from morning until night. Slaves ^{had to} ~~stay~~ rise in the dark of the morning at the ringing of the "Big House" bell. After eating a hasty breakfast of fried fat pork and corn pone they ^{worked in} ~~went~~ off to the fields until the bell rung again at noon; ^{when} ~~then~~ they ate boiled vegetables, roasted sweet potatoes and black molasses. This food was cooked in iron pots with lard. ^{which had been around to the first} ~~There were~~ ^{in order to keep them from cooking directly on the fire.}

Slave Interview
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Mulberry, Florida

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slips were either hung over a fire or set around of hot coals. Biscuits were a luxury but whenever they had white bread it was cooked in a rather thick pan called a "spider". This pan had a top which was covered with hot coals to insure browning of the bread on top.

Slave women had no time for their children. These were cared for by an old woman who called them twice each day and fed them "net likker" (vegetable broth) and gruel with. Each child was provided with a wooden ladle which he dipped into a wooden trough and fed himself. The older children fed those who were too young to hold a ~~ladle~~ *ladle*.

the crawling was "Big Jim" that slaves were forced to work ^{at night}. Expectant mothers rolled in the fields until they felt their labor pains. It was not uncommon for babies to be born in the fields.

There was little time for play ~~then~~. Even the very small children were assigned tasks. They hunted hen's eggs, withered rake berries for dyeing, shelled corn and drove the cows home in the evening. Little girls knitted stockings.

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to make any further progress in the work of the
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further progress in the work of the committee.



Slave Interview
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Wabarry, Florida

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still never were their constitution to hold marriage among themselves. Often when they were in the middle of a song or prayer they would be forced to halt and run to the big house. One to my slave who learned the meaning of the bell that signified him to work and told him when he might "break off" from his labors.

Louise and Sam had heard the ringing of this bell in the fall of 1865. All the slaves gathered in front of the "Big House" to be told that they were free for the time being. They had heard whisperings of the War but did not understand the meaning of it all. Now Big Jim stood weeping on the piazza and cursing the fate that had been so cruel to him by robbing him of all his "children." He inquired if any wanted to remain until all the crops were harvested and when he was asked to do so, he flung into a rage; seizing his pistol, he began firing into the crowd of frightened Negroes. Some were killed outright and others were ⁷¹wounded for life. Finally he was prevailed upon to stop. Then he attempted to take his own life. A few frightened slaves proceeded to run with him another year; this placated him. It was necessary for Union soldiers to make another visit to the plantation before

*you would see this plantation
no longer to desert.*



Slave Interview
Pari Randolph
Gulfport, Florida

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Sam and Louisa moved to ~~Georgia~~ ^{they later bought} where they slave-
cropped for several years; ~~the later bought~~ ^{because} until Sam was
about two years ~~old~~ ^{old enough to help}. They continued to live
on the plantation ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ ~~Georgia~~ until a few years ago,
when their advancing ages made it necessary that they live with
the children. Both ~~had~~ ^{with children} ~~came~~ ^{came} to Florida several years ~~ago~~ ^{ago} and
wanted their parents to come ~~with~~ ^{to them}. They now live in Gulfport,
Florida with the youngest son. Both are slightly infirm but can
still remember the horrors they experienced under ~~the~~ ^{when} cruel
owners. It was with difficulty that they were prevailed upon to
relate some of the gruesome details mentioned here.



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
(The American People, Negro Unit)
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

Martin Richardson
Field Worker
Complete.
842 Words
4 Pages

Slave Interview
Palatka
January 13, 1937.

AN SLAVE WHO WAS A FARMER

In a little blacksmith shop at 1114 Madison Street, Palatka, is a very little horse-shoer who was born in slavery eighty-seven years ago. Lindsey Moore, blacksmith, leather-binder, horse-shoer and a number of other things, represents one of the most successful former slaves yet found in the state.

Moore was born in 1850 on the plantation of John B. Overstreet, in Perry County, Georgia. He was one of the six children of Eliza Moore; all of them remained the property of Overstreet until freed.

On the Overstreet plantation the slave children were allowed considerable time for play until their tenth or twelfth years; Lindsey took full advantage of this opportunity and became very skillful at marble-shooting. It was here that he first learned to utilize his talents profitably. 'Mama Overstreet' discovered the ability of Lindsey and another archaic to shoot marbles, and began taking them into town to compete with the little slaves of other owners. There could be betting on the winners.

Mr. Overstreet was made money in this manner, Lindsey and his companion being consistent winners. But Lindsey



saw possibilities other than the glory of his victories in this new game; with perception that some of the spectators teased him he began making small wagers of his own with his competitors, and soon had amassed quite a small pile of silver for those days.

Although games were unheard-of in Lindsey's youth, he used to watch carefully whenever a cow was skinned and its hide tanned to make shoes for the women and the 'folks in the big house'. Through his attention to the tanning operations he learned everything about tanning except one solution that he could not discover. It was not until years later that he learned that the jealously-guarded ingredient was plain salt and water. By the time he had learned it, however, he had so mastered the tanning operations that he at once added it to his sources of livelihood.

Lindsey escaped much of the farm work on the Overtree place by learning to skillfully assist the women who made cloth out of the cotton from the fields. He grew very fast at cleaning 'rods', cleaning the looms and other operations; when, at thirteen, it became time for him to pick cotton he had become so fast at helping with spinning and weighing the cotton that others had picked that he almost entirely escaped the picking himself.

Leop-making was another of the plantation arts that



Lindsey mastered early. His ability to save every possible ounce of grease from the meats he cooked added many choice bits of pork to his otherwise meatless fare; he was able to spend many hours in the shade pouring water over oak ashes that other young slaves were passing picking cotton or hoeing potatoes in the burning sun.

Lindsey's first knowledge of the approach of freedom came when he heard a loud brass band coming down the road toward the plantation playing a strange, lively tune while a number of soldiers in blue uniforms marched behind. He ran to the front gate and was ordered to take charge of the horse of one of the officers in such an abrupt tone until he 'began to shaking in my bare feet!' There followed much talk between the officers and Lindsey's mistress, with the soldiers finally going into encampment a short distance away from the plantation.

The soldiers took command of the spring that was used for a water supply for the plantation, giving Lindsey another opportunity to make money. He would be sent from the plantation to the spring for water, and on the way back would pass through the camp of the soldiers. These would be happy to pay a few pennies for a cup of water rather than take the long hike to the spring themselves; Lindsey would empty bucket after bucket before finally returning to the plantation. Out of his profits he bought his first pair of



shoes --- though nearly a grown man.

The soldiers finally departed, with all but five of the overbree slaves joyously creeping behind them. Before leaving, however, they tore up the railroad and its station, burning the ties and heating the rails until red then twisting them around tree-trunks. Wheat fields were trampled by their horses, and devastation left on all sides.

Lindsey and his mother were among those who stayed at the plantation. When freedom became general his father began farming on a tract that was later turned over to Lindsey. Lindsey operated the farm for a while, but later desired to learn horseshoeing, and apprenticed himself to a blacksmith. At the end of three years he had become so proficient that his former master rewarded him with a five-dollar bonus for shoeing one horse.

Possessing now the trades of blacksmithing, tanning and weaving-and-spinning, Lindsey was tempted to follow some of his former associates to the North, but was discouraged from doing so by a few who returned, complaining bitterly about the unaccustomed cold and the difficulty of making a living. He moved South instead and settled in the area around Palatka.

He is still in the section, being recognized as an excellent blacksmith despite his more than four-score years.

LEADS INTERVIEW
FBI
S.D. RICHARDS

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BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

Interview with subject, Lindsey Moore, 1114 Madison
Street, Atlanta, Ga.



INTERVIEW OF
American Guide, (Negro Writers' Unit)
Jacksonville, Florida

Viola E. Hays
Field Worker
Complete
2,953 Words
13 Pages

Slave Interview
Jacksonville, Florida

RANDALL LEO

Randall Leo of 800 Drumsen Street, Jacksonville, Florida, was born at Marion, South Carolina about seventy-seven years ago, maybe longer.

He was the son of Robert and Polina Leo, who during slavery were Robert and Polina Miller, taking the name of their master, as was the custom.

His master was Doctor Miller and his mistress was Mrs. Corilla Miller. He does not know his master's given name as no other name was ever heard around the plantation, except Doctor Miller.

Randall was a small boy when the war between the states broke out, but judging from what he remembers he must have been a boy around six or seven years of age.

During the few years he spent in slavery, Randall had many experiences which made such deep impressions upon his brain that the memory of them still remains clear.

The one thing that causes me to believe that he must have been around seven years of age is the statement that he was not old enough to have tasks of any importance placed upon him, yet, he was trusted along with another boy about his own age, to carry butter from the plantation dairy two miles to the 'big house.' No one would trust a child younger than six years of age to handle butter for fear of it being dropped into the dirt. He must have at least reached that age when he was sent two

miles with a package and was expected to deliver the package in that. He must have understood the necessity of not playing on the way. He stated that he knew not to stop on the two-mile journey and not to let the butter get dirty.

Farrall had the pleasure of catching the pig for his father for Doctor Miller gave each of his best Negro men a pig to raise for himself and family. He was allowed to build a pen for it and raise and fatten it for killing. When killing time came he was given time to butcher it and grind all the sausage he could make to feed his family. By that method it helped to solve the feeding problem and also satisfied the slaves.

It was more like so many families living around a big house with a boss looking over them, for they were allowed a privilege that very few masters gave their slaves.

On the Miller plantation there was a cotton gin. Doctor Miller owned the gin and it was operated by his slaves. He grew the cotton, picked it, ginned it and baled it right there. He also had a baler and made the bagging to bale it with. He only had to buy the iron bands that held the bales in tact.

Doctor Miller was a rich man and had a far reaching sight into how to work slaves to the best advantage. He was kind to them and knew that the best way to get the best out of men was to keep them well and happy. His arrangement was very much the general way in that he allowed the young men and women to work in the fields and the old women and a few old men to work around the house, in the garden and at the loom. The old women mostly did the spinning of thread and weaving of cloth although in some instances Doctor Miller found a man who was better adapted to



weaving than any of his wren slaves.

Everyone kept his plantation under fence and men who were old but strong and who had some knowledge of carpentry were sent out to keep the fence in repair and often to build new ones. The fences were not like those of to-day. They were built of horizontal rails about six or seven feet long, running zig-zag fashion. Instead of having straight line fence and gates at regular points they did not use gates at all. The bottom rails rested upon the ground and the zig-zag fashion in which they were laid gave strength to the fence. No posts were used to hold the rails in place. If stock was to be let in or out of the place the planks were unlocked so to speak, and the stock allowed to enter after which they were laid back as before.

Boys and girls under ten years of age were never sent into the field to work on the Miller plantation but were retained to care the smaller children of the family and to do chores around the "big house" for the mistress and her children. Each week as usual was taught the domestic-minded children and tending food in the pots was allotted others with special ability to cook. They were treated well and taught 'manners' and later were used as dining room girls and nurses.

Emmell's father and mother were considered lucky. His father was overseer and his mother was a waitress.

Doctor Miller was a kind and considerate owner; never believed in punishing slaves unless in extreme cases. An overseer, white or colored could whip his slaves with out first bringing the slave before him and having a full understanding as to what the offense was. If it warranted whipping then it had to be given in his presence so he could see that it was not given unmercifully. He indeed was a doctor and practiced



his profession in the hope of his slaves from bodily harm as well as keeping them well. He gave the medicine when they did not feel well and saw to it that they took needed rest if they were sick and tired.

Now, Robert Lee, Randall's father, was brought from Virginia and sold to Doctor Miller when he was a young man. The one who sold him told Doctor Miller, "Here's a nigger who won't take a whipping. He knows his work and will do it and all you will need to do is tell him what you want and it's as good as done." Robert Lee never varied from the recommendation his former master gave when he sold him.

The old tale of corn bread baked on the hearth covered with ashes and sweet potatoes cooked in like manner are vivid memories upon the mind of Randall. Syrup water and plenty of sweet and butter milk, rice and cradling bread are other foods which were plentiful around the cabin of Randall's parents.

Slaves were numerous and the family of Doctor Miller did not need much for their consumption. While they sold milk to neighboring plantations, the Negroes were not denied the amount necessary to keep all strong and healthy. Some of the children on the plantation were thin and skinny for did they ever complain of being hungry.

The tanning yard was not far from the house of Doctor Miller. His own butcher shop was nearby. He had his cows butchered at intervals and when one died of unnatural causes it was skinned and the hide tanned on the place.

Randall as a child delighted in stopping around the tanning yard and watching the men salt the hide. They, after salting it out holes and buried it for a number of days. After the salting process was finished it was treated with a solution of water and oak bark. When the oak bark solution had done its work it was ready for use. Shoes made of leather



were not dyed at that time but the natural color of the finished hide was thought very beautiful and those who were lucky enough to possess a pair were glad to get them in their natural color. To dye shoes various colors is a new thing when the number of years leather has been dyed is compared with the hundreds of years people know nothing about it, especially American people.

Marshall's paternal grandparents were also owned by Doctor Miller and were not sold after he bought them. Levi Lee was his grandfather's name. He was a fine worker in the field but was taken out of it to be taught the shoe-makers trade. The master placed him under a white shoe-maker who taught him all the fine points. If there were any, he knew about the trade. Dr. Miller had an eye for business who could make shoes was a great saving to him. Levi made all the shoes and boots the master, mistress and the Miller family wore. Besides, he made shoes for the slaves who were then. Not all slaves owned a pair of shoes. Boys and girls under eighteen went bare-footed except in winter. Doctor Miller had compassion for them and did not allow them to suffer from the cold by going bare-footed, in winter.

Another good thing to be remembered was the large number of chickens, ducks and geese which the slaves raised for the doctor. Every slave family could rest his tired body upon a feather bed for it was allowed him after the members of the master's family were supplied. Horse mattresses also were used under the feather beds and slaves did not need to have as thick a feather bed on that account. They were comfortable though and Marshall remembers how he and the other children used to fall down in the middle of the bed and become hidden from view, so soft was the feather mattress. It was especially good to get in bed in winter but

not so pleasant to get up unless 'pappy' had made the fire early enough for the large one-room cabin to get warm. The children called their own parents 'pappy' and 'mummy' in a very true.

Samuel remembers how after a foot-washing in the old wooden tub, (which, by the way, was simply a barrel cut in half and holes cut in the two sides for fingers to catch a hold) he would sit a few minutes with his feet held to the fire so they could dry. He also said his 'mummy' would rub grease under the soles of his feet to keep him from taking cold.

It seemed to the child that he had just gone to bed when the old tallow candle was lighted and his 'pappy' arose and fell upon his knees and prayed aloud for God's blessings and thanked him for another day. The field hands were to be in the field by five o'clock and it meant to rise before day, summer and winter. Not so bad in summer for it was soon day but in winter the weather was cold and darkness was longer passing away. When daylight came field hands had been working an hour or more. Robert Lee, Samuel's father was an overseer and it meant for him to be up and out with the rest of the men so he could see if things were going all right.

The Samuel children were not forced up early because they did not eat breakfast with their 'pappy'. Their mother was dining-room girl in her mistress' house so fed the children right from the Miller table. There was no objection offered to this.

Master Miller was kind but he did not want his slaves enlightened too much. Therefore, he did not allow much preaching in the church. They could have prayer meeting all they wanted to. But instructions from the Bible were thought dangerous for the slaves. He did not wish them to become too wise and get it into their heads to run away and get free.



There was talk about freedom and Doctor Miller knew it would be only a matter of time when he would loose all his slaves. He said to Randall's mother one day, "Believe you'll soon be as free as I am." She said, "Who's 'arf money?" and he answered, "You sure will." Nothing more was said to any of the slaves until Sherman's army came through notifying the slaves that they were free.

The presence of the soldiers caused such a commotion around the plantation that Randall's mind was indelibly impressed with their doings.

The northern soldiers took all the food they could get their hands on and took possession of the cattle and horses and mules. Levi, the brother of Randall, and who was named after his paternal grandfather, was put on a mule and the mule loaded with provisions and sent two miles to the soldier's camp. Levi liked that, for beside being well treated he received several pieces of money. The Federal soldiers played with him and gave him all the food he wanted, although the Miller slaves and their children were fed and there was no reason for the child to be hungry.

Levi Lee, the grandfather of young Levi and Randall, had a dream while the soldiers were encamped round about the place. He dreamed that a pot of money was buried in a certain place; the person who showed it to him told him to go dig for it on the first rainy night. He kept the dream a secret and on the first rainy night he went, dug, and found the pot of money right where his dream had told him it would be. He took the pot of money to his cabin and told no one anything about it. He hid it as securely as possible, but when the soldiers were searching for gold and silver money they did not leave the Negro's cabin out of the search. When they found the money they thought Levi's

master had given him the money to hide or they took it from him. Levi mourned a long time about the loss of his money and often told his grandchildren that he would have been well fixed when freedom came if he had not been robbed of his money.

"Pogroms" as the men were called who were sent by the Rebels to watch the slaves to prevent their escaping during war time, were very active after freedom. They intimidated the Negroes and threatened them with loss of life if they did not stay and work for their former masters. Doctor Miller did not want any of his slaves treated in such manner. He told them they were free and could do whatever work they desired.

Robert Lee, during slavery was Robert Miller, as were all of the doctor's slaves. After slavery was ended he chose the name Lee. His brother Aaron took the name Alexander not thinking how it looked for two brothers of the same parents to have different surnames. There are sons of each brother living in Saltila now, one set Lees and the others, Alexanders.

Samuel, as was formerly stated, spent a very little time in slavery. Most of his knowledge concerning customs which long ago have been abandoned and replaced by more modern ones, is of early reconstruction days. Just after the Civil War, when his father began farming on his own plantation, his mother remained home and cared for her house and children. She was of fair complexion, having been the daughter of a half-blood Indian and Negro mother. Her father was white. Her native state was Virginia and she bore some of the aristocratic traits so common among those born in that state of such parentage. He often boasted of her "blue blood Virginia stock."



Robert Lee, Randall's father was very prosperous in early reconstruction days. He owned horses, mules and a plow. The plow was made of point iron with a wooden handle, not like plows of to-day for they are made of cast iron and steel.

Chickens, ducks and geese were raised in abundance and money began accumulating rapidly for Robert and Lethia Lee. They began improving their property and trying to give their children some education. It was very hard for those living in small towns and out in the country to go to school even though they had money to pay for their education. The north sent teachers down but not every hamlet was favored with such. (1)

Randall was taught to farm and he learned well. He saved his money as he worked and grew to manhood. Years after freedom he left South Carolina and went to Palatka, Florida, where he is to-day. He bought some land and although most of it is hammock land and not much good, he has at intervals been offered good prices for it. Some white people during the "Bum" of 1933-1936 offered him a few dollars an acre for it but he refused to sell thinking a better price would be offered if he held on. (2)

To-day finds Randall Lee, an old man with fairly good health; he stated that he had not had a doctor for years and his thinking faculties are in good order. His eyesight is failing but he does not allow that to handicap him in getting about. He talks fluently about what he remembers concerning slavery and that which his parents told him. He is between a mulatto and brown skin with good, mixed gray and black hair. His features are regular, not showing much Negro blood. He is tall and looks to weigh about one hundred and sixty-five pounds.

His wife lives with him in their two-story frame house which shows that they have had better days financially. The man and wife both show interest in the progress of the Negro race and possess some books about the history of the Negro. The book of particular interest, and of which the wife of Randall Lee thinks a great deal, was written, according to her story, by John Brown. It is called "The History of the Colored Race in America." He could not find but a few pages of it when interviewed by declared she had owned the entire book for years. ^{and} the pages she had shown with much pride were 418 to 449 inclusive. The book was written in the year 1836 and the few pages produced by her gave information concerning the Negro, Lovejoy of St. Louis, Missouri. It is the same man for whom the city of Lovejoy, Illinois is named. The other book she holds with pride and guards jealously is "The College of Life" by Henry Lavenport Northrop M.D., Honorable Joseph R. Gay and Professor I. Garland Fern. It was entered, according to the Act of Congress in the year 1900 by Horace F. Fry, in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D. C. (2)

Viola B. Ruse
Field Worker
Coriote
21 Years

Have interview
Randall Lee
Palatka, Florida.

Interviews

1. Randall Lee, 600 Brunson Street, Palatka, Florida.
2. Mrs. Bonnie Eaton, 412 South Eleventh Street, Palatka, Florida.
3. Observation of Field Worker.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
American Guide, (Henry Williams' Unit)
Titusville, Florida

Alfred Farrell
Field Worker
Complete
1,399 Words
7 Pages

Clara Interviewer
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John A. Simms
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Henry Maxwell

"The Free Slavery" might well be called this short biographical sketch of Henry Maxwell, who first saw the light of day on October 17, 1840 in Lawrence County, Georgia. His mother Ann, was born in Virginia, and his father Robert, was born in South Carolina. Captain Peters, Ann's owner, bought Robert Maxwell from George Howell as a husband for Ann. To this union were born seven children, two girls- Elizabeth and Dorothy- and five boys- Richard, Henry, James, William and George. After the death of Captain Peters in 1843, Elizabeth and Richard were sold to the Guinos family. Dorothy and Robert (the father) were purchased from the Peters' estate by Isaac Peters, Captain Peters' son, and Henry and James were bought by James Bushong, husband of Issey Peters, daughter of Captain Peters. (William and George were sold after slavery.)

Just a few years after the Civil War gave him and his people freedom, Maxwell's memories of slavery-days are vivid through the experiences related by older slaves. He repeats

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the story of the plantation owner who turned his dogs to hunt escaped slaves. He had a young youth hide in a tree some distance away, and then he turned the pack loose to follow him. One day he released the bloodhounds late noon, and they soon overtook the boy and tore him to pieces. When the youth's mother heard of the story, she burst into tears which were only silenced by the threats of her owner to put the dogs on her. Maxwell also relates tales of the terrible beatings that the slaves received for being caught with a tool or for trying to run away.

After the Civil War the Maxwell family was united for a short while, and later they drifted apart to go their various ways. Henry and his parents resided for a while longer in Leon County, and in 1881 they came to Titusville, with the two youngest children, Dolores and Annie. Here Henry secured work with a farmer for whom he worked for \$12 a month. In 1884 he purchased a small orange grove and began to cultivate oranges. Today he owns over 50 acres of orange groves and controls nearly 1000 more acres. He is said to be worth around \$250,000 and is Titusville's most influential and respected colored citizen. He is married but has no children. (1)

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Titus T. Byrnes

Titus B. Byrnes, affectionately known as "Daddy Byrnes", is reminiscent of Harriet Beecher Stowe's immortal "Uncle Tom" and Joel Chandler Harris' inimitable "Uncle Remus" with his white beard and hair surrounding a smiling black face. He was born in November 1844 in what is now Clarendon County, South Carolina. With his father, Guffy, and mother, Diana, he owned the Campbell Place plantation which owned 70 or 80 slaves and was noted for his kindness to them.

Byrnes' father was a common laborer, and his mother acted in the capacity of chambermaid and cook. They had 12 children, seven boys- Abraham, Titus, Reuben, Lawrence, Thomas, Willie, and Hulet- and five girls- Charity, Shirley, Fannie, Charlotte, and Violet.

When Titus was five or six years of age he was given to Plowden's wife who placed him for the job of houseboy. Although he never received any education, Byrnes was quick to learn. He could tell the time of day and could distinguish one newspaper from another. He recalled an incident which happened when he was about eight years of age which led him to conceal his penmanship. One day while sitting on the porch, he heard his mistress' little daughter tell her mother that he was writing about water. Mistress Plowden called him and told him that if he was caught writing again

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his right arm would be cut off. From that on his predicament was decided. In regard to religion, Bryce can recall the Sunday services very vividly; and he tells how the Negroes who were seated in the gallery first heard a sermon by the white minister and then after those services they would gather on the main floor and hear a sermon by a Negro preacher.

Bryce served in the Civil War with his best, and he can remember the terrible step between Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. His mistress would not permit Bryce to accompany his master to Virginia to join the Hampton Legion on the grounds that it was too cold for him. And time ended his war days! After the war he went with his father to work on the Hays Plantation. When he was 30 years of age, his father turned him loose. Young Bryce rented 14 acres of land from Arthur Hays and began farming.

In 1868 he left South Carolina and came to Florida. He settled in Enterprise (now Batoon Springs), Volusia County where he worked for J. O. Hays, a farmer, for one year, after which he homesteaded. He next became a carpenter and, as he says himself, "a jack of all trades and a master of none." He married shortly after coming to Florida and is the father of three sons—"see my wife told me," he adds with a twinkle in his eyes. His wife is now dead. He was prevailed upon while very ill to enter the Titusville Poor Farm where he has been for almost two years. (2)

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Della Bass Hilyard ("Aunt Bass")

Della Bass Hilyard, or "Aunt Bass" as she is better known, was born in Darlington, South Carolina in 1828, the daughter of Desier and Eliza Hart, slaves of One Emory. Her two parents were cotton pickers and as a little girl Della often went with her parents into the fields. One day she recalled that the Yankees came through South Carolina with ropes on their shoulders. It wasn't until later that she learned the reason.

When asked if she received any educational training, "Aunt Bass" replied in the negative, but stated that the slaves on the Emory plantation were permitted to pick up what education they could without fear of being selected. He was otherwise, however, to teach them anything.

In regard to religion, "Aunt Bass" said that the slaves were not told about heaven; they were told to honor their masters and mistresses and of the punishment which awaited them for disobedience.

After slavery the Hart family moved to Georgia where Della grew into womanhood and at an early age married Orest Bass by whom she had two children. After the death of Bass, about fifteen years ago, "Aunt Bass" moved to Fort Pierce, Florida.

While there she married Lenny Hilyard who brought her to Titusville where she now resides. a relic of bygone days.

Taylor Gilbert

Taylor Gilbert was born in Gallatin, Georgia, 31 years ago, of a colored mother and a white father, "which is why I am so white", he said. He has never been known to have passed for white, however, in spite of the fact that he could do so without detection. David Ferguson bought Jacob Gilbert from Dr. Gilbert as a husband for Emily, Taylor's mother. Emily had nine children, two by a white man, Frances and Taylor, and seven by Jacob, only three of whom Gilbert remembers- Della, Mary, and Annie. Two of these children were sent to school while the others were obliged to work on the plantation. Emily, the mother, was the cook and washwoman while Jacob was the butler.

Gilbert, a good sized lad when slavery was at its height, recalls vividly the cruel lashings and other punishments meted out to slaves who disobeyed their master or attempted to run away. It was the custom of slaves who wished to go from one plantation to another to carry papers in case they were stopped in suspected runaway. Frequently slaves would visit without benefit of papers, and as a result were suffered severe torturing. Often the sons of the slaves' owners would go "nigger hunting" and nothing - not even murder was too heinous for them to do to slaves caught without papers. They justified their fiendish acts by saying the

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"nigger" tried to run away when told to stop.

Gilbert cannot remember when he came to Florida, but he claims that it was many years ago. Like the majority of Negroes after slavery, he became a farmer which occupation he still pursues. He married once but "my wife got to mixing' around with another man so I am a free man to say so." He can be found in Viera, Florida, where he may be seen daily working around on his own. (4)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
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